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DECK-HAWK ROY'S BIG SCOOP.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



ROY SPRUNG FORWARD, ONE HAND UPON HER THROAT THE OTHER UPON HER HAND THAT WOULD HAVE CLUTCHED THE PISTOL.

Deck-Hawk Roy's Big Scoop; OR, THE SEA-ROVER'S PROTEGE.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I. THE SEA ROVER'S PRIZE.

UPON the blue expanse of waters, some fifteen degrees north of the equator, and in the latitude of the Antilles, my story opens.

Over the quiet waters a trim-looking vessel is slowly gliding, close-hauled on the starboard tack, and urged along by the balmy south winds.

As the sun neared the western horizon the fitful wind gradually died away, leaving the handsome craft becalmed upon the sea.

Upon the deck of the vessel all was trim, and for a merchant craft, as she doubtless was, she carried a heavy armament and full crew, for the time of which I write was when the thunders of war shook the world, and the waters everywhere were the highway for the cruiser, the privateer, and the pirate.

Upon the quarter-deck stood a lovely woman, of perhaps twenty-seven, dressed in exquisite taste, and with her sad eyes dreamily looking out over the blue waters.

By her side stood a handsome boy of six years, with a face strangely bold, intelligent and expressive for one so young.

A glance into the faces of the two, and it was evident that they were mother and son, though the one had dark-blue eyes and golden hair—the other was a brunette.

Near by, pacing to and fro with monotonous tread, was a stout, fearless-faced man of forty—evidently the commander of the vessel, for he watched the waters with an expression of anxiety, that attracted the attention of the lady.

"You seem worried, captain?" she said.

"I fear my fate indicated, my thoughts, my lady. To be truthful, I do not like this latitude to be becalmed in; there are too many cruisers hereabouts, that can't show a commission."

The lady's face changed slightly, but she replied:

"After what I have seen of the speed of your vessel, captain I do not have much dread."

"The Gull can fly when the eagles are about, I admit, my lady; yet I wish we were well out of this latitude. See! there is not breeze enough to ripple the curls upon your brow."

The lady cast her eyes around the waters, and everywhere beheld a dead calm.

In the westward the sun was going down in gorgeous splendor, leaving a rosy hue upon the waters, and tinging every cloud with golden beauty. Then, as the last rim of the fiery globe sunk from sight, a disk of silver appeared far away off above the eastern horizon.

"How wondrously beautiful!" exclaimed the lady in a rapture of delight.

"Yes, my lady—the ripples are coming—the moon is our friend," returned the blunt old sailor, pointing far off in the moon's wake, to where snowcaps were visible, proving that the long-wished-for breeze was hurrying over the waters, as though conscious of being tardy.

Wrapped in a spell, from the exquisite beauty around her, the lady heard not the remark of the captain—she seemed dreaming of the past, recalled by the scene and the holy influence of the hour.

"Sail, ho!"

Startlingly clear the voice rung out from aloft, and both the captain and the lady were at once on the *qui vive*.

The dream of the one was broken by the rude voice breaking the stillness—the heart of the other throbbled with dread of coming evil.

"Whereaway?" called the captain in commanding tones.

"Almost in the moon's wake, sir. It is a large schooner, coming down toward us, wing and wing," replied the lookout from aloft.

"I see her, and a saucy-looking devil she is. Hal! we feel the wind! All hands to make sail!"

The captain spoke with an earnestness that sent every man to his post of duty with a will.

A few minutes more and the Gull fell off to the fresh breeze, and the voice of the commander hailed from the deck:

"Let fall! sheet home!"

In a moment the canvas fell from the yards, the men on deck manned the braces and sheets, and the Gull heeled gracefully over, then darting forward like a sea-bird.

When his vessel was fairly under way, Cap-

tain Leroy turned again to look after the strange sail. It had flung its mainsail to port, and was steering almost the same course as the Gull, and having the wind of her, was endeavoring to creep up on her.

"That fellow is either a cruiser, or a pirate—I fear the latter—and his rakish-looking craft sails like a witch. Mr. Roderick, I'll dress the Gull in her best," and Captain Leroy turned to his mate.

Mr. Roderick made no reply, but silently pointed toward the west, where a great bank of inky clouds were rolling swiftly up into the blue of heaven's dome.

"By Jove! yonder is a friend to us! We will dodge him in the storm. If ever I get safely into Liverpool, I'll get my lady to use her influence to procure me a commission and a cruiser, for I am tired of running from every little sea-dog that crosses my course," and the captain spoke with the same determination he had on making the same threat hundreds of times before.

Nearer and nearer crept the strange sail, and darker and darker grew the skies in the westward, while the wind steadily increased and sent the Gull flying through the waters, now rapidly rising into rude waves.

Still the lady and her son remained on deck. The moonlight was not yet eclipsed by the storm-clouds, and the scene was now one of almost sublime grandeur.

In spite of the speed of the Gull, the little sail to windward still held on, her raking spars crowded with canvas.

A few moments more and the inky veil of the storm was drawn across the face of the moon, and darkness fell upon the sea; but, refusing to retire to the cabin, the lady and her son still remained on deck, crouching down in the shelter of the companionway.

Then followed a strange scene. The storm from the westward met in midair, and upon the sea, the swift wind from the eastward, and the howling combat began with giant force, lashing the ocean into fury.

Stripped of all canvas, except sufficient to hold her steady, the gallant Gull bounded onward, while with each moment, the waves rose higher and higher, and the vivid, forked lightning played with ghastly effect upon the tempest-lashed seas.

Like a huge pall the heavy black clouds hung over the deep, ever and anon met by the spectral arrows of electricity and the roll and rattle of thunder resounded like the crash of a thousand guns in battle, while the shrill scream of the unpeeped tropic hurricane swept over the watery waste like the shrieks of a hundred maddened fiends.

It was a spectacle, sublime, awful, almost appalling.

"I thank God for this storm—fierce as it is, for it will throw that fellow off our track, perhaps send him to the bottom!" cried Captain Leroy in the ear of his mate.

"You think him a pirate, then?"

"I do, Roderick. He had every indication of being one. His decks were crowded with men, and he carried a heavy armament. By Heaven! I never saw a worse blow," and the anxious captain now bent every energy to the safety of his vessel, which strained and plunged and bounded madly, as though frightened by the tempest.

But fiercer and fiercer blew the wind, harder and harder the waves struck the devoted ship, until one huge breaker tumbled aboard with irresistible force, sweeping with it in its retreat back into the sea, a dozen dark forms, torn from their shelter and their hold.

Loud cries for aid, wild shrieks of despair rose amid the tumult and roar of hurricane and wave, as the poor fellows were hurled into eternity—doomed to perish in that wild waste of waters, beyond all human aid.

"My lady, you and your boy must go below. The sea has just torn off a dozen of my crew, and dealt the ship a terrible blow," and the hoarse voice of Captain Leroy resounded in the ears of the frightened woman, who, with her child held close to her heart, crouched down in the companionway.

"I cannot! I will not! Oh, let me stay, Captain Leroy!"

The seaman turned away, and one glance over his vessel told him that there was but one thing to do. The Gull was straining hard, and her canvas was being lashed into ribbons.

"Roderick, we will lay to. All hands ahoy!" and the hoarse trumpet resounded through the gale.

It was a desperate chance, but the bold seamen, undeterred by the fate of their comrades,

sprung to their duty, and in a few moments more the gallant vessel lay with her head to the hurricane, rocking, pitching, drenched with the up-creeping seas that broke over her decks, yet comparatively safe, even in that maelstrom of waters.

Thus the hours passed, until the tropic hurricane had spent itself, and, unlashd by the fury of the winds, the waves gradually subsided.

Then the clouds almost suddenly swept away, and from above shone down the moon, silvering every wave-cap, and causing the spray to glitter like myriads of diamonds hurled broadcast into the sea.

"Well, my lady, the storm has blown itself to death, and you have proven yourself a splendid sailor. See, the waves are running down rapidly," and Captain Leroy pointed out over the waters.

"Ah! what a night of horror it has been. I shall never forget the despairing cries of those poor men. But, the strange sail: do you think the—the schooner could have lived out the storm?"

"There is no telling, my lady. These devilish craft—begging your pardon, my lady—have as many lives as a cat. They strip themselves, and under bare poles, the trim little cutters ride like a duck upon the— By the Lord Harry! look yonder!"

In surprise at this exclamation of their commander, all turned their eyes in the direction of his outstretched arm.

There lay the pursuing schooner not a mile distant!

"All hands to make sail!"

The loud order of the captain brought every seaman to his feet, and the next instant they were running up the rigging like squirrels.

"Roderick, we must give that fellow a wide berth—he means mischief. I am certain. Thank God we have the wind of him now," and the captain issued his orders in a ringing, earnest manner, which proved that he felt that a new danger menaced the ship—one even worse than the hurricane.

A few moments more and the Gull was lying well over under the pressure of canvas she was forced to stand, and every eye was turned upon the strange sail.

With the first show of sail on the Gull, the white wings, double-reefed, of the schooner were spread, and rapidly in chase came the daring little craft.

There was no doubt now; it was the intention of the stranger to overhaul the Gull!

Through the hours of the night the swift chase continued, the Gull straining hard under immense sail-clouds, and the schooner holding her own, and like a bound on the track, coming steadily along in pursuit.

All through the night the mother and her boy remained on deck; as long as the moonlight glimmered on those white sails astern they would not go into the cabin.

The boy knew not his danger, but the fair mother realized it with an almost breaking heart. Should the one in chase prove a buccaneer, what a fate would be hers! At length the moonlight faded away, and with the first peep of the sun above the ocean's eastern rim a change came over the pursuing schooner. All the reefs were shaken from the sails; a burst of flame shot from the sharp bows; a deep boom followed, while an iron death messenger flew above the deck of the Gull, with a sharp, hissing sound, to plunge in the sea ahead.

At the same moment a dark roll ascended to the mainpeak, was shaken out, and the sunlight fell upon the flag of the corsair—a black flag, having in its center the usual insignia—the white skull and cross-bones, of the sea outlaw, while above, on the black ground, were two red swords, crossed.

With a pale, stern face, Captain Leroy ordered the English ensign flung to the breeze, and then gave his beautiful vessel still more sail—every stitch, indeed, which the masts would bear.

Like a frightened antelope on the plains, the Gull now skimmed over the blue-green waters, but behind her came a relentless, untiring pursuer, steadily gaining, in spite of the great speed at which the English craft was flying.

"Roderick, I have but a score of men now, while his decks are crowded. Shall we fight him?"

"Captain, I see no chance of success. Resistance will only infuriate, and if not fired upon, he may be satisfied with robbing the ship, and let us go," replied the cautious mate.

If the captain did not agree with his first officer, he quickly changed his mind as another

shot flew close above his deck, and in saddened tones gave the order to lay to.

On came the schooner, bounding over the yet rough waters, and dashing the spray from her sharp bows, half-way up her tall, slender masts.

A few minutes later the Sea Scourge swept up into the wind, just under the stern of the Gull, and at the same time a boat, crowded with men, left her sides.

A hard, rough row, and the boat was under the lee of the ship.

"Throw us a line!" rung out in commanding tones, and sullenly Captain Leroy obeyed, and soon a man in full uniform sprung upon the deck, and politely saluted the Gull's commander.

He was a person of splendid physique, and possessed a dark, Spanish-looking face, strangely handsome, yet stern almost to cruelty.

His black hair was long and wavy, and his heavy mustache but half-concealed his mouth.

His uniform was dark-blue, trimmed profusely with silver lace; his trousers were stuck in half-top boots, while a slouch hat, shaded by a drooping plume, sheltered his head.

At his side hung a jeweled cimeter, and in his silk sash were stuck two pistols and a knife.

From the moment his foot touched the deck, the eyes of the lady passenger were riveted upon him, with a wild stare that amounted almost to a look of horror; but, not observing her, he said to Captain Leroy, in quick, determined tones:

"You are boarded, sir, by an ocean tax-gatherer. Well for you that you did not resist. For your moderation we will deal fairly with you, for I dislike bloodshed.

"You are doubtless richly freighted, for you are from the West Indies, bound to England. I judge."

Then a slender form glided between the buccaneer and the English commander, and the beautiful, pale face of the woman turned full upon the Sea Rover Chief.

As though he had seen a ghost the buccaneer started back, his lips half-parted, his eyes glaring.

"Good God! Alma! Alma, you and I meet thus!" he said, as though with an effort.

"Yes, Rudolph, but alas, alas! that I should find you a pirate!"

The words were low and inexpressibly sad, and the man bowed his head as though in very shame. His chest heaved, as though pressed down by a mighty weight, and his features worked like one in an agony of remorse and pain.

Then he slowly raised his eyes; a softer light shone in them, and his features were losing their hardness; but he started suddenly—his eyes fell upon the boy, the dark-eyed, handsome boy.

"Ha! that is his child!" he almost shouted, and quickly casting his eyes aloft, he continued:

"And this is his vessel, for yonder flies the flag of his house. Back to your boat, men, for I would take no booty from this ship were I dying of starvation. Back, I say! Here is my prize!"

With a bound he was alongside the boy, and the next instant he held him securely in his left arm, while his gleaming cimeter was raised in his right.

One loud shriek, and the mother sprung toward her boy, to stagger and fall into the outstretched arms of Captain Leroy. She was stricken with terror, benumbed with fear, and dread, and agony, yet conscious.

"Back, I say! do you not heed?" and the buccaneer faced his men, his eyes glaring, his whole frame trembling.

But, they stood in sullen silence.

"Do you hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir; but where is our part of the prize? We've received more hard knocks of late than booty."

The speaker was a tall, reckless-faced seaman, whose malevolent eyes met his commander's unflinchingly.

An instant the buccaneer chief gazed upon him; then he said in strangely soft tones:

"Will you return to the schooner, Halford?"

"Not without a rich booty."

They were the last words the man ever spoke, for the gleaming cimeter cut him to the deck, and the buccaneer chief confronted the rest of his mutinous crew like an enraged lion.

But, they were cowed, and dashed over the side into their boat, in holy horror of the glittering blade.

"Here! two of you hurl that mutineer dog into the sea! Leave no such hideous sights for a fair lady's eyes to gaze upon," called the Sea Rover, and two of his men obeyed.

One glance then upon the mother, who, upon

her knees, and with outstretched arms, the fingers working convulsively, pleaded in dumb, silent agony for her boy, and the freebooter chief turned away, still holding close to his broad breast the frightened child.

"Mamma, my mamma, take me!" cried the little prisoner, and a shriek of anguish broke from the mother's lips.

"Alma, this is my revenge—the Sea Rover's prize! Farewell!" and with a bound the chief went over the bulwarks into his waiting boat: then came the peremptory order to "give way," and the men pulled rapidly back to the corsair schooner.

A moment after the buccaneer was upon his own deck; his ringing voice issued his orders to the surprised and startled crew, and the beautiful vessel filled away, and plowed once more through the tropic seas.

But to the ears of the chief came on the swift wind, the despairing cry of the desolate mother:

"My child! oh! my poor, poor boy—gone forever! gone from your heart-broken mother! My boy, oh! my poor, poor boy!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CRUISER AND THE CORSAIR.

"STARBOARD! hard a-starboard! for the love of God! starboard your helm!"

The stern order broke from the lips of a young officer, standing on the extreme bow of a trim-looking brigantine, and peering searchingly before him into the gloom of night, and a dense fog that rested upon the face of the deep.

A four-knot breeze was blowing at the time, and from the effects of a recent storm the sea was running high, while a drizzling rain made the scene gloomy indeed.

Obedient to the almost frenzied order the quartermaster at the helm put his wheel hard a-starboard with the promptness of a thoroughly trained seaman, while, aroused by the startling voice of the young officer, a score of men rushed upon deck, and the watch sprung to busy life—ready to meet any danger that might confront them.

As the sharp bows of the graceful brigantine swung off, obedient to her helm, there loomed up in the misty gloom dead ahead in her former course, and not half a ship's-length away, the graceful outline of a large schooner, lying silently dark upon the waters.

No light and no human being was visible on board of her, and in the fog and darkness she looked like a specter craft, for her tall, raking masts were bare of canvas.

Slowly the brigantine glided by, and gazing intently upon the strange craft was an officer who had just come on deck.

A moment he looked at the seemingly deserted vessel, and then from his lips broke the hail:

"Schooner ahoy! what schooner is that?"

But the hail was unanswered, and the brigantine glided on until the stranger was lost in the gloom astern.

Then, suddenly, the officer who had hailed cried, commandingly:

"Stand ready all to man ship. To your guns, men! to your guns! Boarders ahoy! ahoy! Quartermaster, lay the brigantine alongside yonder craft."

Instantly the vessel was a scene of excitement. Half-dressed seamen rushed from below and ranged themselves hastily at their guns. Others jumped nimbly to ease off the sheets and braces, while every officer sprung to his post. The magazines were thrown open, and, in almost an instant's time, the brigantine was ready for action.

"Boarders ahoy!" called out the officer, whose sudden order had so metamorphosed the scene on the brigantine's deck, and coming from the cabin, armed with cutlass and pistols, he placed himself at the head of two-score seamen thoroughly armed for the fray, and gathered in a group in the bows of the vessel.

In the mean time the brigantine had put about, and, with the wind upon the other quarter, was gliding back toward the spot where the schooner had been last seen astern, and for which every eye was anxiously searching.

Nearer and nearer drew the brigantine, creeping up on her prey, and a silence like death rested upon her crew.

Nearer and nearer, yet no vessel's outline appeared ahead, no shadowy-looking schooner loomed up in the mist!

"Strange, very strange! We certainly could not have gone ten lengths of the vessel before we put back. Mr. Ellis, ask the quartermaster if he has steered so as to cross our former course where we saw the schooner?" and the captain

turned to the young officer, whose keen eyes and ready order had prevented the brigantine from dashing into the silent, lightless craft.

Quickly the officer ran aft, and in a moment returned with the answer:

"He has held directly for the spot, sir. He marked the schooner's position well, and is certain she has moved."

"Moved? Why, the craft was without a stitch of canvas set, and all were asleep on board. It cannot be that she has stirred."

"If it is the vessel you think, Captain Delorme, you know he has served us some shrewd tricks before."

"True, Ellis; but it is hardly possible for him to have eluded us thus quickly—yes, it was the schooner of Royal, the buccaneer, I am confident, though the fog was so thick I could see but the outline."

"And so with myself, sir; she loomed up suddenly, and, in giving the order to starboard the helm, I did not particularly notice the craft."

"It was Royal, I would take oath. Too bad, too bad, if he has escaped us again!" and the commander of the brigantine stamped his foot with impatient anger.

All through the remaining hours of the night the brigantine cruised slowly off and on, every eye on board diligently searching over the waters, far and near, for the missing vessel.

At length gray daylight stole over the sea, and, breaking through the fog, a ray of sunlight soon after fell upon the brigantine, displaying her exquisite proportions, her long, low hull, sharp and narrow, and painted black; her tall, tapering, raking masts, and her white deck heavily armed with six carronades to a broadside, and a huge pivot-gun upon her fore-castle.

Still at her guns stood their crews, and crouching down forward were the boarders, headed by their commander, a man of striking appearance, noble face, and courtly manners.

One glance into his strong face was sufficient to show that he had suffered much, for it wore a haggard, almost tired look when in repose, while, ever and anon, the dark eyes lost their flashing fire and would droop with an expression of touching sadness.

He was dressed in the uniform of the British Navy, and with the first peep of day the English ensign fluttered up to the main-peak.

The crew, of a hundred men, seemed as though picked for some special service of desperate danger, and the half-score of officers who stood at their posts were all young, fine looking, daring fellows—a number of years the junior of their commander, whose dark hair and beard were threaded with silver, for he had passed the meridian of life.

As the sunlight grew stronger, the mists suddenly raised from off the sea, and a cry of surprised joy burst from every man on board the brigantine, for there, not half a league away, motionless upon the waters, was the schooner for which they had searched the night through.

"Quartermaster—yonder is my game! Lay her aboard!" and the commander of the brigantine pointed with his drawn sword to the schooner, lying quietly to windward, under bare poles, and apparently crewless, for no one was visible upon her decks.

But, as the brigantine changed her course, a sudden change came over the schooner. Like huge white wings her sails were spread to the breeze, and, as she fell off and filled away, there arose to her peak a dark roll of bunting.

Quickly the wind caught its folds and unrolled the black flag of the sea outlaw with its strange device—the skull and cross-bones, and over the red swords crossed.

"Ha! it is Royal, the Buccaneer! See his red, white and black banner! Now, my beautiful Enchantress, run down yonder scourge of the seas, and on my knees will I thank you."

The face of the brigantine's commander was now flushed; the haggard, tired look vanished; the sad light had gone from his eyes, and he looked much younger; but, in another moment, the expression of joy swept away, and in its place came a hard, stern, almost vengeful look. It surely was more than a hatred for the free rovers of the sea that moved him thus.

As the beautiful schooner bounded away in flight, her sharp bows were seen to suddenly fall off rapidly, until her broad side lay toward the brigantine, and then from her dark hull burst forth flash after flash of red flame and white smoke, until four deep reports broke upon the still morning air, and the hurtling iron was sent shrieking with fury upon the devoted brigantine.

Then followed a crashing of timbers, groans of anguish, loud and quick orders from officers,

and a heavy fall, as the foretopmast came tumbling to the deck.

But the well-trained crew never flinched in the midst of the wreck, confusion and death, and the brigantine never swerved a half-point from her course.

Into the rigging crowded nimble forms to repair the damage; the decks were quickly cleared of the dead and wounded, and away rushed the fleet craft after her swift enemy, who, under clouds of canvas, was again pressing on in flight, for a tireless pursuer was on her track.

CHAPTER III. RUN TO DOOM.

WHEN the brigantine had recovered from the effect of the broadside of the schooner, Captain Delorme stood silently watching the flight and pursuit.

Under all the canvas she would bear the Enchantress howled swiftly along; but the wind was increasing to half a gale, and the sea was getting very rough, which caused the stanch craft to stagger under the load of her white wings.

"By the Lord Harry! see how that fellow carries sail! He will run under and thus save his neck!" remarked Orland Ellis to his commander.

"Yes, and we are not gaining an inch upon him; we are barely holding our own. She must have more canvas, Mr. Ellis!" and Captain Delorme glanced aloft.

"She staggers now, sir, like a middy in a waltz, and—"

"True—she has every stitch set now that will draw. I will try the bow-chaser."

Walking forward Captain Delorme ordered the fore-castle gun cleared for action, and sighting it himself applied the match.

The white smoke blew back into his eyes, but, the moment after, a disappointed look crept over his face—the ball had not gone true to the mark.

Again and again the piece was loaded and fired; but with the same result, for the sea was running too high for accurate aim, and the brigantine staggered badly in the rough waters.

"I am only retarding her; I will wait a while," said the captain in a disappointed tone, and he again walked aft.

"Land ho!" came from the lookout in the cross-trees.

"Whereaway?" hailed the commander from the deck.

"Right over the starboard fore-chains," replied the lookout.

"The schooner is slightly changing his course, sir," announced a young midshipman, who had been watching her through a glass.

"You are right. He doubtless has a haunt on some of the Bahamas. Yes, he is heading directly for the land."

"Now, Ellis, we will run him to his haunt, with some chance of following him in, when we have chased him to his den before he has been befriended by night."

"I fear we are going to have a blow, captain. It may keep us from venturing too near in-shore."

"I will go where he does. He shall not escape me now. Ha! the Enchantress feels her canvas, and we must not drive her too hard. Shorten sail a little, Ellis," and the captain glanced anxiously aloft, for the pressure of canvas was dragging the brigantine far over, and the wind was each moment blowing fresher.

But, without a change in her sail, the schooner still held on, and her keen bows could be seen to literally cut through every wave, while her masts bent like whip-handles.

"He'll blow his sticks out, at that rate, and then we'll have him," declared Orland Ellis, after a long look through the glass.

"No such good luck, I fear. Yes, yonder is the land, and he heads directly for it."

And thus the desperate chase continued, until the stiff wind increased to a gale, and brigantine and schooner were both forced to shorten sail or run under.

Ahead of the schooner, and not a league distant loomed up a bold and rugged range of hills, and directly toward them the pursued craft was flying.

A half league astern the brigantine followed in the wake of the buccaneer, every eye on board turned first upon the rocky shore and then upon the craft ahead.

"That fellow is running for his haunt. Crowd on canvas again, Mr. Ellis! I will follow him in, for he has some safe harborage in-shore, I'll wager my life."

Orland Ellis glanced into his commander's

face and then aloft and shook his head; but the order was repeated in a stern, abrupt tone, and the young officer did not hesitate longer. More sail was crowded on the brigantine, which staggered fearfully in the rough waters, and lay over until her lee scuppers were far under.

"Royal is taking the hint, sir, and is crowding on, too," cried a midshipman, as the reefs were shaken out of the pirate schooner's fore and mainsail.

"Yes, he has a secret passage that he fears we may follow him through, if we are close on him. Mr. Ellis, the brigantine shall stand more! Shake the reef out of the mizzen-sail, and set her fore-course."

With an ominous deprecating motion of the head the lieutenant obeyed, and torrents of spray drenched the deck fore and aft.

Still the disciplined crew stood at their guns, their faces calm, their lips silent and stern. No word escaped them, though they felt that their commander was driving the faithful brigantine too hard for safety.

To be dismayed there was to be wrecked on a lee-shore—even if the clouds of white duck did not run the vessel bodily under the sea.

But the stanch craft bore her burden well, and though she careened over until her windward guns pointed at the sky, she staggered along, as if she too held hatred for the daring corsair.

"Ha! he sets more sail, too. Aha, my fine fellow, we have you now!" cried Captain Delorme with grim joy.

Still on flew pursuer and pursued, until but half a mile divided the sharp bows of the schooner from the rocky shore, and a deep, ominous roar, like deafening peals of thunder came to the ears of all and blanched the faces of the brigantine's crew.

It was the boiling, beating, surging breakers, hurled against the rock-rimmed coast, and they were dashing with mad speed upon it.

Suddenly a cry burst from officers and crew. The schooner had slipped by a huge rock far out from the land—the point of a ragged reef upon which the sea hurled itself with fury!

"He is going to run ashore, I verily believe, for I can see no passageway inland," Orland Ellis declared.

"He prefers drowning to hanging," added another officer, as he glanced into the face of his commander, from whose lips escaped a sudden exclamation:

"Great God! he is going to jibe in this gale."

As Captain Delorme spoke, the sharp bows swept around like lightning; the huge sails went over to port with a report like a discharge of artillery, and the schooner heeled over until her keel was visible.

A moment she seemed to hang thus; then, with a loud crash heard distinctly on board the brigantine, the mainmast was wrenched off near the deck, and the foremast went with it.

With a terrible lurch the schooner soon righted, while along her decks rushed her crew, cutting away the wreck of timbers, sails and rigging.

A cry of horror broke from the brigantine's men, but the resonant voice of their commander brought them at once to attention.

"At the guns, there! Stand ready to pour a broadside on yonder wreck! Quartermaster, bring her broadside to bear on yonder pirate!"

All shuddered at the order. To fire upon even a pirate in distress was pitiless cruelty, but none hesitated when they beheld the face of Duncan Delorme, which now was livid with a terrible passion; the veins stood out like whip-cords, the teeth were set with iron force, and the eyes blazed with unnatural fire.

Relieved of sufficient canvas to bring her lee guns up out of the wash of the sea, the helmsman brought the bows round, and the whole side of the brigantine seemed on fire, as the flames burst from the iron muzzles, and the cruel shots were poured upon the wrecked schooner, which rapidly drifted shoreward.

"Stand off and on, helmsman, and let her have the full broadside again!" came from the stern lips, and the constant roar of artillery mingled with the thunderous booming of the breakers.

Nearer and nearer the rocky coast swept the wreck, now lifted on a mighty wave, and now down between the huge shore billows, and all the time the iron hail of the brigantine tearing through her shattered hull, and strewn her decks with dead and dying.

"Ha! she has struck! Now you have a fair target, and see that you do not waste your fire," and the captain turned grimly to his obedient crew, and pointed toward the stranded

corsair, which had been hurled with terrific force upon a sunken reef, while the waves broke over her blood-drenched decks with irresistible fury.

And thus through the remaining hours of daylight the brigantine continued her murderous fire, and at last, when the gloom of darkness and storm settled upon the sea, she bore away from the desolate shore, the wind howling dismally through her rigging—a dirge to the unhappy wretches slain by the remorseless guns of the beautiful vessel.

CHAPTER IV.

ROYAL, THE BUCCANEER.

ALTHOUGH the schooner, when first sighted by the brigantine, had seemed so silent and crewless as she lay upon the waters, her decks were filled with crouching men, and a hundred eyes peered out upon the graceful English craft as she glided by, almost near enough to cast a line aboard.

First discovered by the lookout on the schooner, and seeing the impossibility of continuing on her course without being observed, the young officer of the Sea Rover's deck at once gave hasty orders to the watch; the sails came down with an almost silent run, just as the lights were seen on a vessel, whose square yards betokened her to be a man-of-war.

Slowly the brigantine glided by the seemingly deserted schooner, and the hail of her commander remained unanswered.

But hardly had the brigantine disappeared in the mist than a remarkable change was visible on the saucy craft. The deck, thronged with quick-footed and nimble-handed men; the fore and mainsail and jib went up almost as quickly and as noiselessly as they had come down, and, gaining steerage-way, the schooner moved on directly in the wake of the Englishman, the glimmer of whose strong lights were dimly visible ahead.

"Helmsman, keep directly in the wake of yonder vessel, and hold her in sight; you have her lights to guide you," and the officer of the deck went below into the main cabin.

Therein was a scene of luxurious comfort. Velvet carpets covered the floor; soft divans invited repose; a sideboard, glittering with cut-glass decanters and silverware, contained rare liquors and tempting refreshments. Around the walls hung costly mirrors and paintings, and above the stern-lights or ports were grouped arms of all kinds and nations, from the jeweled cimier of the Turk to the diamond-hilted poniard of the Spaniard.

It was an elegant and commodious saloon for a small vessel, and evidently fitted up by one of refined tastes, for books in various languages were thrown about, as though in constant use; a harp occupied one corner, while a Spanish guitar lay upon a divan, as though recently fingered.

Forward were three doors: one in the center, leading by a narrow passageway to the quarters of the under officers, and the other two into state-rooms, furnished as luxuriously as was the cabin.

As the young officer descended below decks, one of the state-room doors was opened, and a man stepped into the cabin, at the same time drawing over a brilliant uniform a storm-coat.

He was of middle age, with a darkly-bronzed face that would have been handsome, were it not for the look of settled melancholy which rested upon it, and, added to his sternly-cut features, made him seem older than he really was.

His form was of splendid proportions; his eyes restless, dark, and burning; and his hair and mustache iron-gray.

"Well, Octave, what is the stir on deck?" he asked in terse, decided tones natural to him, addressing the young officer who entered.

This officer was a youth of scarcely more than twenty years, and with a face so strikingly handsome, so fearless, determined, and yet stamped with a look of almost womanly sweetness, that it was fascinating.

In repose, and minus the dark curling mustache that shaded the mouth, one might have said it was a face of feminine beauty; but, with the eyes lighted up with excitement, it could change into the countenance of one possessed of undaunted courage and a will of iron.

His form was simply perfect—tall, graceful, and indicating both strength and activity, while his feet and hands were remarkably small and well-shaped—those of the born aristocrat.

He was attired in a storm-suit, and a slouch hat, which he had doffed upon entering the cabin.

In answer to the question addressed to him, he replied quietly:

"It is raining, and a dense fog rests on the water; but I spied the lights of a vessel coming on, and, finding I could not run for it, stripped the schooner to bare poles, hoping the coming craft would run by without seeing us; but it sighted us and hailed. I returned no answer, and, as soon as we lost her form in the mist, I set sail again and we are now following in her wake, while he is looking for us."

"You did well, Octave. No better seaman lives than you are. The craft proved to be a war-dog, then?"

"Yes, Captain Royal; she is the brigantine that has so long been dogging us, if I mistake not. Have you any orders, sir?"

"None: I will go on deck with you. The noise above aroused me, and sleep is banished for the night. In truth, I am in no humor to toss about on my pillow until morning, wrestling with my conscience, which is getting strangely poignant of late."

The man seemed to speak the latter part of his sentence as though thinking aloud; but the youth made no reply, and returned to the deck, while his chief approached the sideboard, and poured from a decanter a glass half full of brandy.

This he dashed off at a draught, and then left the cabin.

With the lights of the brigantine in sight, it was an easy thing for the helmsman to keep the schooner in her wake for a while; when the schooner was suddenly put away in a fog-bank, and once more lay under bare poles upon the water.

But the brigantine again changed her course, and, as the reader has seen, discovered the schooner shortly after sunrise, and at once gave chase.

Seeing that it was war to the bitter end between them, Captain Royal promptly showed his defiance by giving his enemy a broadside, and then stood away at race-horse speed for his rendezvous in one of the Bahamas, whose low-lying islands, with their intricate approaches and reef barriers, afforded almost perfect security and secrecy.

"That brigantine sails like a witch. If I had my full crew, I would try and take her away from her commander, for the schooner is getting old," said Royal, addressing the young man whom he called Octave, and who was his first officer.

"Yes, sir; the Bride of the Sea has done good service, and the brigantine would be a fine capture," responded Octave, and his eyes flashed, as though he half wished his commander would attempt to capture the Englishman.

On continued the chase, until the island rendezvous appeared in sight, and the Bride of the Sea stood boldly in toward the land, her commander fully conscious that the Englishman could not follow through the circuitous passage between the reefs, and which led to the harborage beyond the cliffs—a sheltered haven almost in the very heart of the island, and for years the retreat of sea rovers and buccaneers of the Gulf.

"Curses on the fellow! He is making me strain my Bride out of all shape to thus carry canvas," growled the chief, as the brigantine's increased canvas caused him to shake the reefs out of his reserve sails.

Like an arrow the buccaneer flew on, her deck swept by the high-reaching swells and her masts groaning beneath their weight of duck in such a fierce swell.

On, on she swept, until the outer reef was left astern and a narrow channel loomed up ahead.

To make this channel, in a storm, was a desperate undertaking, for, approaching the island as she did, and with the wind blowing from the quarter it was, the chief knew he would have to jibe his vessel.

"Now, my Bride of the Sea, you are to prove our safety or our coffin," grimly said Royal, as he stepped forward and took the wheel, motioning to the youth to aid him.

Without a word the young officer obeyed, and the next moment the voice of the chief rung out:

"Down helm! hard, hard down!"

Like lightning the wheel flew round, the sharp bows swung swiftly through the wild waters, and the sails were caught and hurled to starboard with a force that was irresistible.

A moment after the Bride of the Sea was a dismayed hulk upon the mad breakers, and a score of strong arms were cutting away the wreck of masts and rigging.

Like a statue stood Royal, the Buccaneer, his hands still clutching the wheel, his eyes glaring upon his doomed vessel.

Then he started, for the roar of artillery burst on his ears; the brigantine was firing upon the wreck!

"Ha! how the proud Englishman hates his foe! Down all! Here comes a broadside from a merciless enemy."

Loud rung the voice of the chief, and all but two threw themselves prone upon the deck to escape the iron hail.

Those two were Royal and his young lieutenant. They stooped and stirred not as the hurtling shot struck the doomed wreck, cutting, tearing, crashing through wood, bone and flesh.

Up from the blood-stained deck went a wail of anguish, and above those shrieks of pain were heard the curses of the corsair crew—cursing those who fired upon them, wrecked, helpless and drifting to death as fast as the mad waves could bear them.

Silent, stern, his eyes glaring like a tiger at bay, his hands still clutching the wheel, stood Royal, the Buccaneer.

By his side, in like attitude, was the young lieutenant—calm, unmoved, fearless—ready to meet unflinchingly any doom that was meted out to him.

Again and again came that appalling iron hail from the brigantine, when, suddenly, the Sea Rover staggered back, his face livid, his eyes starting, and a great red stream bursting from his side, upon which his right hand was convulsively clasped.

With outstretched arms, and a smothered cry of dismay, Octave sprang forward and caught the staggering form of his chief, and laid him gently upon the deck, while the bronzed-faced crew gathered quickly around. In the fall of Royal, their chief, their dead and wounded comrades were forgotten; a greater grief had come.

"Octave—my boy—I—am—dying. Death has at last hit me—hard. There is much I would say, but my heart—is—is—bursting—raise me up—there—you, Octave, are my successor! I leave you my name, and my flag. Men, salute your new chief!"

As the words left the lips of the dying Sea Rover, the crew of the schooner burst forth in a wild cheer!

Ere the echoes died away, the wreck was raised high on a mighty breaker, and hurled with terrific force upon the coast-line reef.

Then, suddenly, down upon the blood-stained deck poured a relentless wave, that bore off on its crested bosom the form of the new dead chief, and a dozen struggling wretches, hurled into a grave beneath the sea.

CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT OF SUSPENSE.

THE death-scene on the deck of the schooner so engrossed all who witnessed it, that the landward flight of the Bride of the Sea was unnoticed, until the shock came, when it was hurled upon the rock.

Then the boarding wave followed, and ere all could spring to a place of safety, its relentless force tore a number away to be engulfed in the pitiless surges.

Octave seized hard hold of the wheel, and thus saved himself, while a number of the crew grasped tightly to the nearest means of safety, and, though it was a terrible struggle for life, the wave passed on and they were momentarily safe.

With the last words his lips uttered, the breath had fled from the body of the chief, and, borne off on the sea he found a grave in the blue deep upon which he had for years been a terror, alike to traders and cruisers, for even vessels-of-war had good reason to remember the Sea Rover's guns and fleet craft.

The last huge breaker, though it had torn away some of the crew, rendered the position of those that remained more secure, for it forced the stranded hull higher upon the reef, and in a position that prevented the seas from again so completely washing her decks.

Yet at the same time it rendered her a better target for the avenging guns of the venturesome brigantine, which still poured their merciless fire upon the wreck and now utterly helpless crew.

Toward their young chief the eyes of the crew now turned. What should they do in that dire extremity?

Calm, unmoved by all that had happened, Octave, or Royal, as I will now call him, stood by the wheel, his eyes turned over the waters, in the direction in which he had last seen the body of his commander borne on the crest of a wave.

But the men came around him and broke his

reverie, and he turned at once and glanced out upon the brigantine, which was going about, a full mile distant, and preparing to pour her starboard broadside once more upon the wreck.

Then he glanced over the side of the schooner for an instant, and in calm tones said:

"Men—go down into the hold! The brigantine's shots cannot reach you there, and darkness will put an end to her merciless work before long."

Silently the men obeyed, and, as they disappeared below, another iron storm swept literally the deserted decks.

But the young chief did not flinch as it tore by and over him. It brought to his face a reckless smile.

Then, with a glance around the horizon and at the gloomy skies, he turned and descended into the cabin, closing the companion-hatch behind him.

Here there was but one mark of destruction. An iron messenger from the Englishman had passed through and through the cabin, yet doing slight damage.

As stationary as the rock upon which she lay, except when a huge wave struck her and caused her to tremble from stem to stern, the schooner seemed more like a house than a vessel, and with firm tread the chief began to pace the floor, his lips sternly set, his brow clouded.

What his thoughts were who can tell?

Young, elegant in form and manner, brave as a lion, he occupied no place in the world where he would be an honor to his race—no place, for did he not tread the deck of a pirate craft? Was he not the leading spirit of a band of wild, reckless, crime-stained men? Did he not fly the black flag of the buccaneer, and was he not hunted from sea to sea as an ocean brigand—a flying freebooter? Why was he brigand, freebooter, corsair? Had will or circumstances made him what he was? Had that delicately-shaped hand willingly taken the life of the innocent?

A moment he paused as he caught sight of his face in a mirror, and a strange smile hovered about his mouth while he muttered:

"Well, my inheritance is a pirate flag, a pirate crew, and a pirate's name; but I will not cast one unkind thought upon your memory, my chief, for you have been to me all that a father could have been; ay, you have been as gentle to me as would have been my own mother. Oh, God! would that I had a mother, a father! How dearly would I love them! But that joy is not for me. Had they lived, I would not now be here, a hunted man, a sea outlaw."

Sometimes I think I remember my mother—an angel form, an angel face, who was wont to sing sweet melodies to me and call me her infant king. Mother—mother!"

And his voice quivered with uncontrollable emotion as the word lingered on his lips in a whisper.

"But, what right have I to dream?—am I not really a buccaneer, hounded from sea to sea? Am I not homeless, nameless, lost to the great world where honor is to be won? Is not dishonor my only inheritance?"

"By heaven! how cruelly determined that brigantine is! She is knocking the poor schooner to pieces; but her time may yet come, for I shall be again afloat, and woe be to one who was so merciless as to slay helpless men!"

A while longer he paced to and fro, and then, as though the close cabin stifled him, he threw open the companion-hatch and went on deck.

Already was darkness stealing over the perturbed waters. The avenging brigantine was barely visible in the distance. Even the rocky shore was shut out from his view. The huge swells still ran high, but were subsiding, for they no longer reached the schooner's decks, which were strewn with splinters and fearfully torn up, while here and there the body of a dead buccaneer was wedged in between the bulwarks and a gun-carriage or entangled in some of the shattered rigging.

"Ha! there comes yet another broadside! You are terribly in earnest, Sir Englishman! Perhaps you have some private grudge to settle against my dead chief. If so, you can take it out against me, for am I not his son and successor? I shall soon again be on the trackless sea; that is my destiny—my fate; and, once more afloat, under the flag which Royal made so dreaded, I shall keep his memory green."

As the chief spoke, the broadside rattled over and against the schooner, and a wild shriek from below told that some unfortunate buccaneer had been struck as it tore through the hull. But the face of the youth remained unchanged; his gaze was still on the distant brigantine.

"Aha! you have decided to leave now, after

your work of ruin, and well for you, for if I mistake not, this lull is only a gathering of wind and wave for a fiercer struggle," and the young Captain Royal watched the brigantine until she slowly disappeared in the gloom.

"Hol below there! All hands ahoy!" he suddenly called out, in ringing tones, and hurrying feet were at once heard as the crew obeyed, with eager alacrity.

"Men, our enemy has gone, at last; but it is not through mercy. Darkness and yonder coming blow frightened the English vulture away from his prey. Overhaul the boats and see if they are fit to trust our lives in, for, strong as the Bride of the Sea has proven, I fear her shattered hull cannot stand much more."

"The men gave their young chief a cheer, and a groan for the departing brigantine, and then set to work with a will. The boats, the two yet remaining, were overhauled, and with blank faces they reported that they were so badly shattered it would be madness to attempt to use them in that rough sea."

"Very well, lads; we will remain here and take the chances. The wind is veering a little and the sea may be merciful. Turn in and we will make the best of it."

The young chief spoke cheerfully, and the crew, somewhat reassured, once more went below, leaving their commander pacing the disordered and shattered deck.

And there he remained until the bursting of the new storm drove him once more to the cabin.

Through the long hours of the night the wreck trembled beneath the Titanic blows of the sea, and those who crouched in her hull expected each moment to feel her wrested from her rocky bed and torn, timber from timber, leaving them at the mercy of the raging waters.

But the stanch hull of the Sea Rover had battled too long with the tempest-swept ocean, and met the shock of combat too often, to be wholly subdued, and the morning broke to find her still resisting the mad violence of the surges.

With the first glimmer of day the storm subsided, the wind died away, and the waves became less violent, so that hope arose in the hearts of the wrecked and wretched crew.

The carpenters at once set to work repairing the boats. By noon the mountainous seas had run down to such a degree of calmness that the surface was no longer turbulent. The young chief and his crew therefore seized that moment to embark in the two boats, and pulled rapidly away from the wreck, laying their course toward what appeared to be a wall of rock, rising to a height of a hundred feet, precipitous from the coast-line; but, as the boats drew near this seemingly solid sea-bastion there appeared an opening in it fully a cable's-length in width. Through this rift in the rocks the young sea chief held his way, as though perfectly acquainted with the rough-cut channel.

Upon either side were visible the rugged tops of sunken reefs, and around him was a wild scene, for a ragged shore lay on his right, a network of reefs were on his left.

But ahead the passageway enlarged, and soon the rocky entrance was passed, a snug little harbor was before them—a haven of safety, with green sloping hills surrounding it, and a small hamlet of cabins nestling away under the hillside, and close to a silvery beach.

Captain Delorme had guessed aright—the buccaneer, when wrecked, was running with all speed for his rendezvous; but fate was relentless, and death overtook him in sight of his island home.

CHAPTER VI.

RICARDO, THE MUTINEER.

It was a picturesque scene—the island home of the Sea Rovers, and, as the young chief sat in the stern-sheets of his cutter, and glanced around him, his face lighted up with a look of interest.

Before him lay the little bay, its waters unbroken by a ripple, and protected seaward by the high wall of rock, while landward the sunny beach was sheltered by the green hills.

Nestled away amid a small grove were a score of rude cabins, before which were gathered groups of men, women and children, gazing intently at the approaching boats.

Upon the white sands lay a dozen boats of various sizes, and anchored, not far from the shore, was a large hulk, doubtless once a merchant-vessel that had fallen a prize to the buccaneers.

A small, trim-looking schooner of thirty tons, a craft of an equal size, lateen-rigged, and half a dozen catboats, comprised the pirate fleet.

Back upon the hillside, and half-hidden in the trees surrounding it, glimmered the white walls of a more imposing structure than the cabins on the beach, and upon the porch in front, leaning against a vine-encircled column, stood a female form—her eyes narrowly watching the coming boats.

All these scenes fell under the eye of the young chief, and, doubtless, as his gaze rested upon the young woman, recalled unpleasant memories, for his brow clouded, and his lips became sternly set.

As the cutter grounded on the beach, Royal sprung ashore to have his hand grasped by a tall, dark-looking man dressed in a gaudy uniform.

"Well, Señor Vane, has the schooner run foul of a rock, that you return in the boats?"

"Your ears must be dull, Ricardo, not to have heard the firing off the island," answered the chief, while the crowd gathered around, eager to hear his words.

"Firing! *Santa Maria!* has harm befallen the schooner, señor? The roar of the sea against the rocks has drowned all other sounds." The man spoke with intense earnestness.

"Yes, the bride of the sea lies on Devil's Reef, dismantled and a broken wreck."

"And the chief—the Señor Royal?"

"Is dead—killed by the fire of an English cruiser," sadly responded the youth.

"The schooner wrecked and the chief dead?" and there came a flash of triumphant joy into the man's face, as he added: "Then I am chief now!"

"No; Captain Royal willed me his name, his flag and his command," quietly returned the youth.

But Ricardo's eyes blazed with fury, and in a mocking tone he retorted:

"You, a boy—to step into the place of one like Captain Royal!"

"Yes, a boy, who will prove your master; so I warn you not to try conclusions with me, Ricardo."

Instantly there was a scene of excitement, for all felt that trouble was brewing, and the seamen and the islanders quickly chose sides.

Ricardo had for years been second in command to the chief, and was known as a brave and skillful officer.

A Spaniard by birth, he had yet been brought up on board an American man-of-war before the mast, but had given up the life of an honest seaman for that of a pirate, and his ability soon made him most useful to Royal, who promoted him to be commandant of the island, where he held complete sway.

But those who had served on the schooner under the young officer, the adopted son of their chief, preferred him to Ricardo, and they quickly ranged themselves behind the youth, while the islanders, some sixty in number, formed a line to support their leader.

A quiet smile rested upon the face of the young chief as he observed these demonstrations, and he said, calmly:

"Men, there is no need of this demonstration on your part. The quarrel—if such it must be—is between Lieutenant Ricardo and myself. I will not permit strife and bloodshed among you."

Then, turning to the mutineer officer, he continued:

"You feel yourself aggrieved, Ricardo, that you were not made chief. Were you fit for such a position I would cheerfully yield to you, for you are my senior by many years; but you are of a cruel, ambitious nature, and Heaven have mercy on the helpless creatures who fall into your hands on the high seas."

"By the Mary Mother, boy, I will teach you a lesson for your words!"

And Ricardo sprung forward with drawn sword.

Instantly it crossed the blade of the young chief, who said, sternly:

"Back, men, and give us room! He who proves himself the better man now will be your chief."

A cheer answered the words, and then, with glaring eyes and excited manner, men, women and children gathered around to witness the deadly combat, for they felt that one or the other must fall.

With determined energy and hatred in every feature Ricardo wielded his heavy blade. He was fighting for a prize he had long coveted—that of chief of the buccaneers.

With cool skill Royal met the attack, warding off every blow, parrying every thrust, and proving himself a perfect master of the weapon.

His indifferent manner, the smile upon his

face, and his continued skill in defeating Ricardo's favorite thrusts, enraged the Spaniard to fever-heat and got for him a severe cut across the cheek from the point of his enemy's blade.

Rendered wild by this proof of the superior skill of his adversary Ricardo dropped his left hand upon a pistol in his belt.

The quick glance of Royal saw the act; the demon in him seemed aroused, for his face grew livid, his eyes flashed fire from beneath his dark brows, and, with a sweeping blow, he struck the sword of Ricardo to the ground.

Again his weapon wheeled in a circle of light and with telling force came down upon the left arm of his foe as it was outstretched, pistol in hand.

A flash and report followed, almost in the face of Royal, but the arm that was outstretched fell to the ground, completely severed from the shoulder, and the nerveless fingers still grasped the smoking pistol!

With a cry like a wild beast, of rage, pain and terror commingled, Ricardo staggered back and fell into the arms of his men, the blood streaming from his lacerated shoulder—his eyes rolling in the agonies of death.

Wiping the powder from his face, but unhurt, Royal turned to the assembled crowd and said, sternly:

"Men, let there be no quarreling among you. Go to your respective duties, and in a short while you shall have work enough to do, for the flag of Royal, the Buccaneer has not yet been driven from the seas!"

A wild cheer burst from one and all on the beach, those who had sided against him, as well as his own crew, and with the last echo of their voices, the soul of Ricardo, the mutineer, took its flight.

Raising his hat in salute to the crowd, Royal, now the undisputed chief of the buccaneers, turned away, and wending his steps through the hamlet, took a path leading up the green hillside toward the house in the grove, where the form of the woman was yet visible, standing on the vine-clad porch, her gaze turned toward the excited crowd upon the beach.

CHAPTER VII.

ROYAL'S GOOD RESOLVE.

As the young chief approached the cabin the eyes of the woman were bent searchingly upon him, and with a look hard to fathom.

There was a strange face, for it was the perfect wreck of what once had been most beautiful. Every feature was decided, and wore an expression peculiarly its own, for the eyes were keen, penetrating and suspicious, the mouth sneering and determined, the brow intelligent, and the nose that of a shrew.

Under some circumstances the woman might have made a splendid being; under those in which her life had been cast she had made a very Fury. Neither her form or face denoted old age, and yet her long hair, worn in braided coils around her head, and her eyebrows, were as white as snow. She might be forty, and she might be seventy—which, it would take a close observer to tell.

She was dressed in a loose-fitting robe of silk; her neck was encircled by a diamond necklace; her wrists were clasped by bracelets of rubies, and her fingers glittered with the most costly stones, literally wearing a prince's ransom upon her person.

"Well, young sir, you have been soaking the ground with blood. It was Ricardo you slew, I believe?" she said, as the young chief approached.

"It was, madame. He chose the wager of battle, and I killed him."

Royal seemed about to pass on, but hesitated and turned toward the woman, as she added:

"Well, what will the chief say to this? He loved you, and yet he held high regard for Ricardo."

"True; but it grieves my own heart to say that I come alone, for he who has so long guided this band, he whom—"

"Curses on your sorrow, boy! Speak out! Has evil befallen Royal?" and the woman almost clutched at the throat of the young man.

"Royal is dead."

The woman brought her other hand up, and both clung with a tenacious grasp, while she said slowly:

"Royal dead! Who killed him?"

"He was killed by the fire of an English brigantine. The schooner was wrecked in running in and half of the crew were either slain or drowned. Those who come with me are all that remain from the Bride of the Sea. In dying, Captain Royal made me chief. I became his heir to a crime-stained name, a pirate flag,

and a band of buccaneers. Now you know all that I can tell you, so unhand me, for I feel as though I was in a serpent's shiny coils."

The young chief spoke hastily, and with a bitter, sneering tone. He evidently held only loathing for the woman.

A moment she gazed upon him, her features working convulsively, and yet whether from sorrow, fury, joy, or what, no one could say.

She dropped her hands, and bowing low with mock respect, said in her harsh tones:

"All hail, chief! Royal left a fit representative in you, for if you are not a devil's cub, I know not where to find one."

"Woman, for years I have put up with you from the love I bore my chief. Now I rule here, and I warn you to have a care lest you drive me to extremes. The home back in the hills you shall have, and all the jewels you can hang about you are at your service, with servants to look after your wants; but this cottage is mine, now, and to-morrow you must leave it, for I will not put up with your presence."

Something in the tone and manner of the young chief warned the woman to beware, and she remained silent, while he passed on into the cottage.

It was a rather pretty little home, whose four rooms were luxuriously furnished with articles taken from captured ships.

Entering the room on the right, the chief threw himself into an easy-chair and seemed lost in thought.

"Oh, God! that I could cut loose from this hell of misery and lead a different life. And why can I not?" he resumed, while his face lighted up with a flash of hope.

"Yes, there will be war between the United States and England, that is certain, for the Americans will not longer submit to the outrages perpetrated upon them. And then I have a field before me to win an honorable name, for I could skim the seas as a privateer and sink forever the name of Sea Rover. Yes, I could win pardon for the past, and be respected among honorable men. God knows my heart is not in this life, and that circumstances I could not control made me a sea outlaw. Yes, I will sail for Vera Cruz in the *carera*, and cut out of the harbor that beautiful schooner which the Mexicans have just had built in Boston, and which we chased so long in the *Bride of the Sea* in her outward passage. Well, it is good we did not catch her, for she would have been wrecked. No, I forgot how swift she was—she could easily have run away from the brigantine, for she showed the *Bride* her heels without setting half her canvas. Yes, I will talk the matter over with the men, and henceforth lead an honest life. Ha! if I fail in getting the schooner, I will hunt the seas down for the brigantine and carry her by boarding—Royal, my loved chief, would then be avenged!"

Excited by his thoughts the chief sprung to his feet and paced to and fro awhile. Then he walked out upon the piazza, and stood gazing over the now moonlit sea.

Mechanically he walked down the steps and wended his way toward a distant cliff, from which a fine view was visible, of the ocean, the rock-bound coast, the little harbor, and the buccaneer hamlet.

As he passed from the cottage the woman, who still stood where he had left her, after their interview, watched his departure with eager eyes.

As the tall form disappeared in the gloom she darted into the house and entered the room where he had sat so long musing, and planning for the future.

It was the chamber of the former chief, and more resembled a ship's cabin than a room.

Stepping quickly toward a large iron box, or chest, in one corner, the woman touched a small spring and the lid flew open.

The sight that met her eyes was dazzling, for a treasure of precious stones lay in a confused heap before her—the wealth of years of sea-robbery.

But the riches were pushed indifferently aside until a bundle of papers was visible on the bottom of the box.

These were quickly seized and thrust into her bosom with a half-cry of joy.

Then, having rescued the prize she had sought, the woman gazed gloatingly down into the iron receptacle of countless treasure, her eyes growing greedy and more greedy as she looked upon the dazzling display, which trembled and glittered in the moonlight that shone through the open window, and caused the stones to throw back many-hued lights, of crystal and green.

But, with a shake of the head, she lowered the

heavy lid, the spring clicked, and the woman walked from the room into her own apartment on the other side of the hall.

Here she deposited the bundle of papers in a safe place, and thrusting a dagger and pistol into the folds of her silk sash, she walked from the cottage and took the path leading to the cliff—the same path that Royal, the buccaneer, had taken.

CHAPTER VIII.

ACCURSED AMONG MEN.

"Elsie, why have you sought me here?" and Royal spoke kindly, as he turned and beheld the woman before him, her snow-white hair looking like threads of silver in the moonlight.

Struck by his kind tone the woman paused, for it was not often that words of kindness passed between these two. Indeed, for years the youth had seldom spoken to her.

"I came to talk with you, chief. To-morrow I must leave the cottage, you say, and go to the house in the hills, where Royal first had his home, and where he was wont to come to see me whenever he was at the island. But, that was when I was not what I am now; it was when I was beautiful—years ago, years ago."

"It is best that you should live there, Elsie. The house is a pleasant one, and you shall have about you every comfort, and servants to wait on you. Besides, it is only a mile from the hamlet."

"Yes—there I will go, for you seem not inclined to have me near you. Perhaps, now that you are chief, you will wish to bring home with you from the seas, some fair mistress—one whom you would drag down to perdition, as I was dragged down by your predecessor."

"Elsie, well do you know that you wrong me. Except in battle I have never wronged my fellow-man; I have never shown aught but kindness to the unfortunate women whom we have captured. The chief has told you this."

"Yes—he told me you made a poor pirate, that you carried your heart in your hand; but what are you to do now?"

"Elsie, I have determined to lead a new life. Hold! listen to me! You know that England and America will go to war soon. In fact, hostilities have already commenced. I have determined to seek an honorable name in the service of the United States."

"Ha, ha, ha! and leave me to become queen of the buccaneers?"

"Oh, no; a man who commands a horde of buccaneers must be a very devil—a woman would be worse. If I am not complimentary, blame yourself for it. The men will side with me, and—"

"Will you cruise against the English?"

"Yes—my sympathies are with the Americans, and I believe I am an American by birth; but of that my chief never told me—he was strangely reticent about my early life."

"Boy, you are a fool!"

"Thank you, Elsie!"

"I repeat it, you are a fool! Here, at an age hardly beyond your teens, you find yourself with a name and flag that has terrified the world, and now you wish to cast aside your brilliant chances to win fame and wealth, and turn honest."

"I have wealth, if I desire to touch treasure that is tainted with blood; fame I intend to win under an honest flag."

"Bah! what right have you to talk of honesty?"

"It is never too late to mend, Elsie. As long as the chief lived, I was subservient to his wishes, for he took care of me almost from infancy, brought me up to know right from wrong. Even though he led me to do the latter, he taught me as thoroughly as would a tutor, and all that I know, all that I am, I owe to him."

"Yes, you are a pirate's *protege*," sneered the woman.

But the young chief seemed determined not to lose temper, and replied, quietly:

"Yes, I am a pirate's *protege*; Elsie, I will be no longer a willing sea rover."

"Why do you wish to turn honest—you, who are disgraced of mankind?" and the woman's eyes flashed viciously.

"Because I am tired of leading the life I have—sick of outlawry and ill-doing."

"That is," in bitter sarcasm, "you have cut throats in the past, under a black flag; you propose to cut throats in the future under a flag of another color? Ha, ha, ha! One would think you had been taught Bible lessons by a loving mother!"

"Elsie, beware! my mother's name is sacred. I do not know her; in dreams only can I recall

her; yet I would not have your lips pollute her name."

The woman seemed almost wild with suppressed emotion, and her face turned the hue of death; and with a hard-drawn breath she said, in a voice deep and cruel:

"You talk of honor, Royal, my brave young buccaneer chief! You hold with respect the name of your mother! Boy, your mother was a curse to you!"

For a moment the chief seemed awe-struck by her words and manner; then his face became livid; the blue veins stood out on his forehead, and his eyes fairly burned with brightness.

Like a tiger about to spring, he stood, and the woman, seeing her danger, put her hand in her sash.

But she was not quick enough, for, with a cry of rage, Royal sprung forward, one hand of iron upon her throat, the other grasping the hand that would have clutched the pistol.

A shriek of pain and terror escaped from the livid lips of the woman.

"Accursed hag!" cried the infuriated young chief; "I will hurl you from this cliff for thus insulting my mother's memory!"

Raising her in his powerful arms he seemed for an instant about to carry out his terrible threat; but his madness left him and he placed her once more on her feet and shoved her rudely from him.

"You are a woman! Accursed as you are, you are of the same sex of her that gave me birth."

For an instant the woman stood in silence, hatred and fear struggling for the mastery; then she spoke again:

"Boy, you came near doing a deed that has no parallel. Listen! You have cursed me, and, bitterly as you may regret it, I can tell you a terrible truth: *I am your mother!*"

Like one pierced to the heart, Royal staggered back until his very steps were on the edge of the cliff. There he halted, and his burning gaze was turned upon her.

For some moments he stood thus, but at length he said, as though thinking aloud:

"She lies in her false throat! She whom I see in my dreams was young and beautiful; this is a hag of Inferno!"

"Boy, once I was beautiful, and my beauty made me what I am—a hag of Inferno; but I tell you the truth: *You are my child!* Yes, I hated you because you disgraced me in the eyes of the world—hold! hear me—when you were born, I was not an acknowledged wife."

"Oh, God! oh, God! can this be?"

"It is true, boy! I tried hard to love you, and cared for you when you were a wee prattler; but upon the high seas I met him who had lured me from heaven—met, *your father*, for I was flying from my native land to find a home in one where I could at least shun those who despised me. Yes, met him, your father, *Royal, the Buccaneer.*"

"I am listening, woman."

"Woman? Did I not tell you that I was your mother? The name seemed a pleasant sound upon your lips awhile since—call me mother now! No, you will not? Well, I will tell you more of your life, and then hear you talk of honor."

"To this place Royal, the Buccaneer, brought the mother of his handsome boy, and here she has lived the years that have gone by since that meeting on the high seas. The other, his gallant boy, he took with him in his schooner, and taught him the trade of piracy! You were raised by Royal not to know that he was your father, and I your mother."

"Now, Octave Royal, will you talk of honor Will you—"

But Royal heard no more; he bounded away from the cliff, the ring of the woman's demoniac laugh still echoing in his ears.

CHAPTER IX.

TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

In the fortress-sheltered harbor of Vera Cruz, and lying close inshore, was anchored a schooner of a build decidedly American, and which looked out of place there in the midst of vessels so widely differing from her in model.

At her peak fluttered the green, red and white flag of Mexico, and upon her decks were a score of men wearing the uniform of that country.

The schooner was about three hundred tons' burden, and painted black, excepting three ribbons of green, red and white that encircled her hull, which was long, low, and narrow, with sharp bows and sufficient roundness in the head to combine grace, beauty and swiftness.

Her masts were exceedingly long and slender, and raked saucily; her spars were light, trim

and of great length, while like her masts they shone as if varnished.

The sails were white as snow and neatly furled, while her fore-top gallant and royal yards—with which she was also rigged—were squared with unusual precision and care.

Upon her deck was an extremely heavy armament for so light a craft—three glistening guns to a broadside, and three pivot thirty-twos amidship, and fore and aft, giving her a battery of nine pieces, and with those mounted on pivots, six guns to a broadside.

Around her masts were racks filled with boarding pikes and cutlasses, and upon the decks not a rope was out of place, not a coil of rigging which was not carefully suspended from its pin.

It was about six in the afternoon: the sun was yet an hour high, and those on her deck, an officer and a score of seamen, were watching the coming into the harbor of a small, lateen-rigged craft, driven before the fitful sea-breeze that was just springing up.

With a speed hardly believed possible in such a light breeze the *carera* came along, and running close under the stern of the schooner came gracefully up into the wind and let drop her anchor.

"Well done for a Mexican, for such the fellow at her helm seems to be," exclaimed the only officer upon the schooner's deck, and he bent his gaze more searchingly upon the *carera*, which was now lying quietly at her anchor, the dozen men who comprised her crew, skillfully putting all in ship-shape, as though for a lengthy stay in port.

"Aboy, the schooner!" suddenly rung out in the clear voice of the *carera's* helmsman.

"Ho, the *carera*!" called out the officer replying, as he had been addressed, in Spanish.

"I would see the commandant of the schooner, señor; can I come on board?"

"What the deuce does he want, I wonder?" muttered the officer, and then he called back:

"Ay ay!"

A few moments after a small boat ranged alongside. In it were three persons—the helmsman and three oarsmen.

As the former stepped upon the deck of the schooner he beheld before him a man of striking appearance, for his form was elegant, his face frank, fearless and intelligent.

"You would see me, señor," he said politely, gazing also with admiration upon his visitor.

"Yes, señor, I learned at Tampico that the Mexican Government had built, in the United States, a schooner to protect its coast from the buccaneers, and I desire service upon her if this is the vessel."

"You can doubtless be accommodated, for the Mexicans are enlisting a crew now. As for myself, I merely brought her from Boston to Vera Cruz for them, for I am not a Mexican, but an officer of the United States Navy."

"You found her a swift craft, judging from her build, and doubtless had a pleasant run out?" and the man looked admiringly over the beautiful vessel.

"I never saw a better sea-goer, and as for speed, she outran the famous schooner of Royal, the *Buccaneer*, who chased us, hull down for half day. I played with the pirate when I found out the speed of the craft," and the American seemed pleased at the remembrance.

"Where shall I go to ship on the schooner, señor?"

"To the Government office in the city. I hope the crew will soon be made up, for I expect my own vessel in port every day, for I was to join her here. My country is now at war with England, and fighting the British will be more to my taste at this time. You see, I wear but one shoulder-strap, and have another yet to win," and the gay young American laughed lightly, as though he anticipated rare sport in the war with Great Britain.

The commander of the *carera* then thanked the officer, and went over the side into his own boat.

A half-hour more and he was at the Government office in Vera Cruz, when he made his desire known to the proper authorities, and came under the keen and suspicious eye of a Mexican official.

But his story was soon told. He was a sailor, he said, and had, with a dozen companions, sailed down to Vera Cruz to ship on board the schooner, from a love of adventure. They had chartered a *carera* to run them down from Tampico, and were ready for duty at any time.

The Mexican Government was sending only picked men on the schooner, for her work was to be one of great danger; the young volunteer

would do, and if he could vouch for his companions they would also answer.

Thus it was settled, and the crew of the schooner was nearly made up.

The following morning Lieutenant Rupert Maurice, the young and handsome naval officer, who had been ordered by his Government to carry the schooner to Vera Cruz, was relieved of his command by a dark-faced Mexican lieutenant, who came aboard with two midshipmen and forty men.

As the lieutenant went over the side into his waiting boat, he beheld coming up the harbor his own vessel—an American brig-of-war, which, soon after, came to anchor a few cables' length distant from the schooner.

All through the remainder of the day the Mexican lieutenant gave himself no rest. He was drilling his new crew at the guns, and working them nearly to death, for he was anxious to invite the officers of the American brig to dine with him the following evening, and hence was determined to have all shipshape, and the crew disciplined.

When night came, at last, he rested from his labors and robed himself in his best for a visit to the American brig, for he had promised Lieutenant Maurice that he would call in the evening.

As he had found the young volunteer from the *carera* such a useful hand, he left him in command, for his Mexican brother officers had not yet come on board; they would flirt with their dark-eyed lady-loves until the last moment before ordered to sail on their perilous work.

As the boat rowed away, with a crew of eight oarsmen, a coxswain, and the pompous officer in the stern-sheets, its course was closely watched by him who had enlisted to serve against the buccaneers.

As the boat disappeared in the gloom of night, he passed along the deck and called to a number of seamen to follow him into the hold, as the lieutenant had left orders regarding the moving of the ballast, the schooner listing too much to starboard.

A few moments after he came on deck, alone, and glancing out toward the *carera* a moment, he took a lantern from the deck and raised it three times above his head.

Ten minutes of silence followed; then the boats came alongside, loaded gunwale deep with dark forms, which, the next moment, stood on the deck of the schooner, where half a score of men were busy securing the hatches of the steerage and cabin companionway.

"Now, Benedict, return to the *carera* and slip your cable: there is a mist coming in from the sea that will greatly aid us. Steer up the coast and there I will join you within the hour. If chased, head for the island—I will stand out to sea, and if discovered draw the pursuit after me. Do you understand?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the man addressed as Benedict, and he sprung back into one of the two boats, which was at once rowed back to the *carera*, with the other in tow.

Swiftly from the sea came in a light mist which soon made the harbor appear as though filled with specter vessels, for they looked weird-like in the shadowy gloom.

But the keen eye of the man, who was playing some bold game, saw the *carera* slowly glide away from her anchorage and disappear.

Then he turned quickly, and ordered in low, stern tones:

"Up with that anchor, men, and work in silence, for your necks are in a noose."

A few moments more and the beautiful vessel was free from her moorings, drifting on the tide.

"Let fall everything that will draw now, and sheet home," was the next low order, and in five minutes more the schooner swung round to the breeze, just as the boat returned on board, and the pompous lieutenant sprung with surprise on deck.

"*Maledicto!* what means this?" he cried, in a rage, jerking his sword from its scabbard.

"It means that you are my prisoner, señor," replied the man in whose charge he had left the schooner.

"Take that!" and the Mexican made a sweeping blow at the head of the man, who caught it skillfully on his own blade, and with a skillful turn of the wrist tore the weapon from the Mexican's hand.

"Señor, I would not kill you willingly—do not drive me to it. You are my prisoner, and if you resist, or cry out, I will cut you down. Men, come forward here, and no harm shall befall you," and he turned to the boat's crew, for they had followed their leader on deck.

Silently the Mexican and his men stood. They knew it was death to resist, and a moment after they were securely ironed and gagged.

Taking the wheel of the schooner, the captor of the beautiful vessel turned her sharp prow toward the open sea.

Like a shadow vessel she sped along, and after an hour's run sighted the *carera* only a short distance ahead.

Running up into the wind, the *carera* lay to, and a short while after the schooner was alongside of her.

"Now, Señor Mexican, you and your men are at liberty to return to Vera Cruz; and in place of the vessel I have taken from you, I leave your Government the gracefullittle craft alongside; and having been a pirate herself, she will be well adapted for the work you had in view for this schooner."

"In the name of the Virgin! who are you?" groaned the unhappy Mexican.

"I am *Royal*, the *Buccaneer*—so tell your Government."

The Mexican started visibly; but he made no reply. He silently went on board the *carera*, followed by those of his crew who desired to accompany him, for a wild set most of them, they were only too willing to ship under the black flag of the buccaneer when *Royal* gave them a chance to do so.

A few moments more and the two vessels swung clear of each other—the *carera* with its cursing crew of Mexicans heading back toward Vera Cruz, the schooner, with *Royal*, the buccaneer chief, pointing her sharp prow toward deep water.

CHAPTER X. THE RETURN.

THE island home of the buccaneers was bathed in a flood of silvery light, for the moon rode high in the heavens, and the skies were blue and cloudless.

One month had passed away since the thrilling scene upon the cliff between the young chief, and she who called herself his mother, and from that time no word had come from *Royal*, who had fled from the spot after the interview, feeling accursed before God and man.

That very night he had gone aboard the *carera*, at anchor in the harbor, called his crew to their posts and spread his sail, leaving the island under command of one whom he felt he could well trust—an old English seaman who had long sailed with him.

As the bright moonlight fell upon the cliff that night, one month after his departure, it lighted up the form of a woman—she who had driven *Royal*, the chief, to fly from her in horror.

Like a statue she stood, gazing upon the wild scene of wave and rock, while her face wore an anxious air, and her hands fingered nervously at her dazzling necklace of diamonds, which shot forth a thousand fiery glances in the moonlight.

No life was visible anywhere else, to animate the wild scene of rock and ocean—only an iron-bound coast that dashed back with ominous roar the foam-covered waves that surged against it.

No sail dotted the moonlit waters, and the buccaneer hamlet lay in silent repose, no light twinkling from a single cabin window.

Suddenly the woman leant forward with eager, straining gaze, and her wild eyes were fixed far off upon the waters.

"It is a sail—no, it is a bird. Bah! a bird would not hover over the sea at night—no, it is a sail," and she bent forward still further, her whole manner that of nervous expectation.

"Ha, ha, ha! I feared I had driven him to madness and to death; but no, he loves life too well—he will return—ay, he comes now. But no—that is not his vessel. Ha! I forget, he went to capture a fair bark with which to skim over the glad waters, and redden their crests with human blood."

For a long time the woman stood in silence, her eyes fixed upon the approaching sail, which could be made out as a large schooner, under a cloud of canvas, heading directly for the cliff, and coming swiftly on, driven by a ten-knot breeze.

"She comes boldly on—ha! she turns the outer reef—there is one aboard who knows this channel—it is the boy. But no—she may have rounded that reef by accident. I will wait and see."

Eagerly she looked until the schooner drew near inshore, and then she said, quickly:

"If he puts his helm hard-a-starboard now, it is the boy; if not, yonder pretty craft will dash to death in ten minutes. Ha, ha, ha! it is the boy. I will await him here, for he will

come; I know he will come to receive his mother's greeting. Yes, they will tell him I await him here, and have waited night after night since he left. Come, come, my brave boy, your mother longs to clasp your blood-stained hands and greet you home."

Like an enraged tigress the woman paced to and fro, keeping her eye upon the schooner, which most skillfully followed every turn in the tortuous channel, until she glided into the little harbor, came up with her sharp bows to the wind, and dropped anchor.

A moment after a boat left her side, and in half an hour a tall form came from the shadow of the trees, and approached the cliff with quick, stern tread.

It was Royal, the young buccaneer chief, and his face was cold and stern.

"Ha, ha, my boy, you have come for your mother to welcome you home," said the woman, in a harsh, sneering voice.

"I have returned, woman, and I was told I would find you here. One month ago you drove me from you in despair, for you told me that which crushed my heart, dashed to the earth every noble aspiration. I have returned successful, for I cut out from under the guns of Vera Cruz, yonder schooner. You saw her come in, and know how she sails. With that vessel I longed to serve the Americans, in their struggle with England; but if you speak the truth, and I am accursed, as you say, then I turn my back upon all truth and nobleness, and fight yonder craft under the black flag—my inheritance from him who you say is my father. Now, woman, as you hope for the safety of your soul hereafter—by all the honor you once had in your heart, tell me, did you speak the truth—Am I your son—was Royal my father?"

Almost imploringly the chief held forth his arms, and pleadingly his eyes turned upon the woman, while his lips quivered with emotion.

"I spoke the truth—you are my son, and Royal was your father. Ay, more still, you were born in sin—a curse rests upon you."

The woman spoke in terribly earnest tones, and every word cut deep into the heart of him who heard.

"It is enough—I ask no more—from this night you will find your son worthy of his dishonored mother—his crime-stained father."

Wheeling quickly on his heel, the chief strode rapidly away, unmindful of the call of the woman for his return.

Taking the path leading to his own quarters, he entered his room, and was met there by the seaman whom he had left in command of the island and who, as a British subject, rejoiced under the name of English.

"Captain, I am glad to see you home, sir—you slipped in unawares."

"Yes; I ran right in to the anchorage, and I have captured the finest craft afloat. But tell me, English, has the woman, Elsie, removed to the cabin in the hills?"

"Yes, sir; but she has spent most of her time on the cliff, watching for your return."

"And did you get the guns off of the wrecked Bride?"

"Yes, sir; and all that was of value from the cabin; she has gone to pieces now, poor craft, but I had good weather for the job, and we lost but little."

"You deserve credit. Now I am going to again leave you in command of the island, and I wish you to fortify the commanding points of the channel, for I may be run home some day, as I intend to make the ocean a hot place for every flag that floats."

And the chief spoke with a sternness that surprised his companion.

"When do you intend to sail, captain?"

"In a day or two. I intend to put my vessel in perfect trim with what I take from the Bride of the Sea, and I wish a crew of a hundred men."

"That will leave me about half a hundred all told."

"Yes, they are enough. Now let us go down to the beach, for I wish to begin work at once—my brain and heart are both on fire, and if I do not have excitement I will go mad."

The last sentence he muttered to himself, and leading the way he started for the beach, where a busy scene was being enacted, for the whole island population had turned out to welcome the new schooner.

CHAPTER XI.

THE THREE VESSELS.

OVER the rough waters of the Gulf, and urged on by a twelve-knot breeze, three vessels were staggering onward, their masts curving beneath the pressure of canvas that covered them.

The leading vessel was a large merchant-ship, flying the Stars and Stripes at her peak, and evidently straining under the tremendous clouds of white duck that hovered above her decks.

That she was flying from danger, the manner in which she was forced through the waters proved, while upon her deck there was anxiety upon every face—from the captain, a bluff, determined-looking man of forty, to the cabin-boy, a lad of twelve.

"Oh, Captain Pinkney—the cruiser is still gaining upon us," cried a sweet voice, and a slender, gracefully-formed maiden of seventeen came from the cabin, and looked anxiously astern, while her beautiful face turned a shade paler.

"Yes, Miss Maurice, the Englishman seems too much for us—although, as you will see, if you cast your eyes aloft, I have got the Queen dressed in every stitch she will bear in this breeze; but how is your father, Miss Maurice?"

"He is no better—nay, he is worried so, that I fear he may have a relapse, and he was just getting strong again, after his severe attack of illness."

"But is it not strange, captain, that the cruiser has not fired upon us?"

"He certainly is in range, miss—hal down into the cabin, miss, for yonder comes a shot," and the captain seized the maiden hastily by the arm, and dragged her into the cabin, just as an iron shot whistled over the ship's deck.

A moment after he was again standing by the helmsman, narrowly watching the cruiser through his glass, as she came rushing on, her lee scuppers under water, and a great wall of foam about her bows.

"If yonder fellow astern of the cruiser is an American, I fear John Bull is going to get two prizes, for he comes boldly on," he said to his mate who approached.

"He has gained considerable on the Englishman—he certainly is not going to attack him, for he is not half the size of the cruiser."

"He may be another John Bull, sir," said the quartermaster politely.

"True, but he looks American; there is no flag at his peak that I can tell by—by Jove! how he comes on!"

The cruiser referred to was a heavily-armed brig, with square yards painted jet black, and her figure head, a gilt St. George's cross on a black shield, was plainly visible whenever her bows raised high on a wave.

She was pierced for sixteen guns, and carried a crew of a hundred and fifty men, a large number for a vessel of her armament.

Upon her decks everything was in perfect order—her crew at the guns, and her commanders and his officers upon the quarter-deck, alternately glancing at the merchant-craft ahead, and the vessel rushing on astern, with a speed that was hardly credible.

"By Heaven! the cruiser is going to fire again—it is useless to resist, and I will lay to before I get my sticks knocked out," and the captain of the American merchant-vessel issued his orders to lay to, just as another iron shot buried itself in the ocean, not a fathom from the vessel's stern.

The next moment the American was rocking upon the waters, and the cruiser came bowling along with the speed of a race-horse.

As the vessel ceased her flight, there came on deck the same maiden who had been ushered so unceremoniously back into the cabin, by the kind-hearted captain.

Leaning heavily upon the arm of a negro servant, there followed a gentleman of perhaps fifty, his face worn by sickness, and his form emaciated.

"Well, Colonel Maurice, you have come on deck to see me surrender," said Captain Pinkney, sadly.

"Yes, Pinkney; it was death to me to remain below. I wished to see for myself what was going on," replied the gentleman, taking an easy-chair brought him by the maiden.

"It is a sad sight, colonel; but I could not do otherwise, as the cruiser would have knocked me out of the water."

"You did right, captain; but what craft is that astern of the cruiser?"

"An elegant little schooner that has been coming on after the Englishman—perhaps also under the flag of—No, by Heaven! see there!"

As Captain Pinkney spoke a puff of smoke came from the schooner's bows, a deep boom followed, and a shot went tearing through the cruiser's rigging.

Instantly all was excitement on board the Englishman. They had found out that the craft dogging their wake was an enemy—a small but plucky foe.

"It is an American cutter, or privateer, and a daring one, too, to attack yonder John Bull," said Colonel Maurice, while every eye on the merchantman was turned upon the two vessels, now known to be hostiles.

"Hal! the Englishman is going to wear ship and attack him. It is madness for that schooner to offer battle. See, he is going about, and will run for it."

"By the Lord Harry, no, captain—behold!" exclaimed Colonel Maurice, and his pale face flushed with excitement.

As he spoke the schooner brought her broadside to bear upon the cruiser, and a burst of flame and smoke followed, while a hurricane of iron rushed upon the Englishman, which was just going in stays, preparing to put back and fight his daring little foe.

The result of the schooner's broadside was at once evident to the watching eyes on the merchantman—the rigging was cut in a hundred places, the sails were pierced, and it was evident that sad havoc had been made among the crew, while, missing stays, she rolled fearfully in the waters.

But the schooner was not idle, for its other broadside was delivered with telling effect, and she showed an inclination to come to closer quarters.

"By the Lord Harry! he will sink the Englishman in half an hour at that rate," exclaimed Colonel Maurice with enthusiasm.

"Colonel, that craft is handled as wickedly as though the Devil was her commander," said Captain Pinkney.

"She is handled beautifully, and her commander deserves a frigate—brave little American."

"Ha! see, there flies her flag—a pirate, by Jupiter!"

It was Captain Pinkney that spoke, and all eyes were turned upon the schooner, and a sight met their gaze that sent a thrill of horror through every heart. There, at her peak, waved the black flag of the buccaneer.

One look through his glass, and Captain Pinkney said, quietly:

"I said the Devil commanded her; it is Royal the Buccaneer."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CRUISER AND THE BUCCANEER.

THE remark of Captain Pinkney almost caused a panic through the ship, while the face of Pearl Maurice turned to an ashen hue—to be taken by an English cruiser was bad enough; but to become the prize of a pirate—the thought was too horrible to dwell upon.

"Captain Pinkney," and the voice of Colonel Maurice was deep and stern—"you hauled down your colors to an English man-of-war, and not a pirate. The cruiser has his hands full with the schooner, and I insist that you at once get under way—if the British Government claims this craft as a prize, she can get it, but not now."

"I am only too willing—all hands to make sail!" and at the cheering order the crew of the merchantman sprung actively to work.

"The schooner is still peppering away at the cruiser, and he has him at a terrible disadvantage—hal! the cruiser is now opening," and as the colonel spoke, the Englishman opened fire upon the schooner, which was still rushing down toward him, as though determined to board, even in that rough sea.

In the mean time the American got under way, and her masts were being quickly covered with canvas, while every heart beat high with hope of escape.

But suddenly a hurtling shot came flying after the American, fired from the buccaneer, and cut away the mizzen topmast.

"On, on, captain—we must not mind a little iron," cried Colonel Maurice.

But seeing that the American did not obey his stern summons the pirate luffed quickly and hurled an iron broadside after the flying vessel.

"Down all!" cried Captain Pinkney.

But, alas! the torrent of iron swept over the devoted vessel, killing and mangling half a dozen of her crew, one of whom, the helmsman, fell at the feet of Pearl Maurice.

"It is no use, colonel—I must lay to. That fellow fires with too much accuracy; another broadside might sink me."

"True, Pinkney; but it is terrible—I hardly know what to advise—hal!"

As the colonel spoke, the buccaneer began to wear around for another broadside, seeing which Captain Pinkney sprung to the helm, issued his orders, and the ship swept up into the wind, just as the schooner presented her cruel broadside.

But seeing that the American had laid his

sails aback, the buccaneer again turned his whole attention to the cruiser, and a fierce combat followed between the two.

Had the schooner not fired with such deadly aim, and in the first broadside gained such an advantage, it would have been ten chances to one in the Englishman's favor; but the buccaneers were dead shots, and their vessel was handled with masterly skill, while, as if to aid them at close quarters, the sea was rapidly running down.

Repairing damages as quickly as possible, the cruiser stood off to get to the windward of the buccaneer, when two broadsides, delivered in rapid succession from the schooner, again caused the Englishman to lose steerageway, while so far no shot had touched the beautiful and daring little vessel.

"That schooner is going to whip the Englishman, certain," said Colonel Maurice.

"And we have gotten out of the frying-pan into the fire—under other circumstances I could enjoy that fight," remarked Captain Pinkney.

"He is crowding down upon him to board—and see how his grape rakes the cruiser's deck. Pearl, my daughter, do you not think you had better go below?"

"No, father; there is a fascination in this scene that I cannot resist—please let me remain," and the maiden never took her anxious eyes off of the fighting vessels, which were now not a mile distant from the merchantman.

Nearer and nearer crept the buccaneer to the cruiser, both firing rapidly, the Englishman wildly, and the schooner with fatal precision, for few shots had yet touched the pirate's rigging or deck.

Nearer and nearer they came to each other, until by a skillful maneuver the sharp bow of the buccaneer swept up under the stern of the cruiser, and the vessels were lashed firmly together, while half a hundred dark forms hurled themselves upon the decks of the Englishman, and the rattle of small-arms, the clash of steel, and shouts of the combatants, were distinctly heard on board the American.

"Now, Pinkney, now is your time to fly, while those fellows are playing Kilkenny cats," cried Colonel Maurice, excitedly, and again the voice of Captain Pinkney rung through the ship, again the men sprung to their posts—catching, like drowning men, at a straw of hope.

A few moments more and the merchant ship Queen was again plowing through the waters, and hope of escape rose high in every heart.

But a cry from Pearl Maurice, whose eyes had been riveted upon the combatants, caused all eyes to turn toward them.

"By Heaven! the pirates have been driven back to their own vessel—the Englishman was too much for them at close quarters," cried Colonel Maurice, and as he spoke the two vessels swung apart.

"You are mistaken, colonel; the combat still rages on the Englishman's deck—the buccaneer has it all his own way, and has cut loose to chase us," said Captain Pinkney, sadly.

"You are right, Pinkney—luff up, quick! or we will get another broadside."

Seeing the utter impossibility of escaping from the tenacious little buccaneer, the Queen was again brought up into the wind, and seeing the movement the schooner put back, and once more lay alongside of the Englishman, upon whose decks clambered a reserve of a score of men, whose wild shouts spread dismay among the brave crew of the cruiser.

For a few moments longer the fight raged fiercely, and then an exclamation of horrified disappointment arose from the decks of the Queen—for all beheld the English ensign hauled down, and the black flag of Royal, the Buccaneer, run up to the peak of the cruiser.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DOUBLE PRIZE.

"It is all up with us; but bear up, Pearl, my dear child, for gold is what the pirate wants, and he shall have a golden ransom—his double capture will put him in a good humor, and we can easily make terms with him."

Colonel Maurice spoke with cheerful hopefulness—yet he dreaded the worst.

"Royal has never had a bad name for murdering captured crews, or insulting women," said Captain Pinkney, and a moment after he continued, at the same time watching the two vessels closely:

"Now he is coming to interview us. See, the schooner has cut away from the cruiser."

Swiftly over the waters bounded the graceful vessel, and luffing quickly up, a cable's length

from the Queen, a boat was lowered, and came rapidly toward the American.

A few moments more, and the tall, commanding form of Royal, the young buccaneer chief, sprung upon the deck of the Queen, and advanced toward the quarter-deck, where Colonel Maurice, Pearl and Captain Pinkney awaited him.

In the background stood the negro valet and maid of the colonel and his daughter, their eyes wild with fright, their dark faces ashen in hue.

"Who commands this ship?" and the voice of Royal was stern, his brow dark and lips firm.

"I do, sir—it is the American merchantman Queen, Colonel Delancey Maurice, owner; bound from Vera Cruz to Boston," promptly replied Captain Pinkney.

"You tried hard to evade me, sir; did you suffer much from your stubbornness?" and Royal cast his eyes over the vessel.

"Three men killed and three wounded—two of whom will die. Do you blame a man for flying from death?"

"It is not always certain death to be captured by Royal, the Buccaneer—though a black flag rover, he is merciful," said the chief, with a slight tone of sarcasm.

"And what is the intention of your chief regarding us?" said Colonel Maurice, quietly.

"I have no chief—I am Royal," sternly replied the buccaneer.

"You! you are Royal? a man with your face a pirate leader?"

The young chief started, and for the first time his eyes fell upon Pearl, for she it was who had spoken to him.

"Ha! I knew not that I had turned my guns upon a woman. Lady, from my heart, I regret that I caused you dread," and he doffed his plumed hat and bent low before her.

Then his eyes sought hers with an eager, wistful, admiring gaze, all commingled, and after a long glance into her beautiful face, a glance that caused the crimson blood to course through her every vein, he said, softly, while a look of inexpressible sadness crept over his countenance:

"Lady, had such as thou art crossed my path years ago, I would not now have been the guilty being I am. Yes, I am a pirate, lady."

"I would never have believed it from other lips than your own—you are too noble looking to possess a bad heart. Ah! sir, it is not too late yet to change your life, for the seal of wickedness is not yet stamped upon your face," and Pearl spoke almost pleadingly, while her beautiful eyes looked full into his own.

"Lady, a short while ago and I made a determination to sin no more, and endeavor to win honor and a name as the friend of America, and the foe to England—and then I might have touched your hand without dishonor."

"You can yet win honor, sir, for your gallant combat this day will give you fame from sea to sea. It was most daring of you to attack a vessel so vastly your superior," and Pearl spoke with enthusiasm.

"We poor wanderers of the sea, lady, fight with a rope around our necks. Is it a wonder, then, that we fight well? Upon the sea has been my home for years and years, and the roar of battle the music that charmed my boyish hours, while the blood-stained deck, the white face of the dead, the groans of the dying, have greeted my eyes and ears by night and day. A rough school has been mine in the past, sweet girl; and yet I would have given up yonder sable banner, and no longer have been a buccaneer!—had not a great sorrow fallen upon me—a grief I could not shake off, a stain that was deeper-dyed than the stain of blood. This it was, lady, that sent my good resolves whirling to leeward, and made me again revel in the gory combat of the buccaneer."

The deep feeling, the sorrowful face, impressed, not only Pearl, but all who heard him, and almost pity arose in their breasts for the pirate chief.

"What you refer to, sir, I cannot know; but let me entreat that you rise above your griefs—a good resolve should not be idly broken."

The chief gazed in silence across the waters for some moments, and then turned his eyes again upon the maiden. After an instant he said:

"Lady, you have conquered—from this moment I make a new resolve—one I will never break. Captain, you can proceed upon your voyage unmolested. Hold! I will do more. Ho! the Witch of the Wave!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and a young officer from the buccaneer boat alongside approached and saluted his commander.

"Roy, go on board the English cruiser, and

request her commander to return here with you."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the young officer departed upon his errand, while Royal, with clouded brow and stern lips, paced the deck of the Queen, none daring to address him, for they felt that some terrible struggle was going on in his breast.

CHAPTER XIV.

PEARL'S CONQUEST.

AFTER an absence of half an hour, in which her course to the cruiser was eagerly watched from the decks of the Queen, the boat returned, and two officers, one clad as an English naval captain, the other as a midshipman, came on board.

"The English commander is here, sir," and the youth, whom his chief had called Roy, walked up and addressed Royal.

The buccaneer started, turned in his walk, and his eyes fell upon Pearl.

Instantly his face flushed, and then recovering himself from his fit of abstraction, he bowed to the English commander and said, in his terse, decided tone:

"Captain, since I left your deck, I have changed my plans. It is my intention to make your vessel a prize to the United States—"

"Ha! the United States employs pirates, then, in its service?" said the Englishman angrily.

"You are mistaken, sir; I am not under the employ of the United States, and owe no allegiance to other than myself. Still I sympathize with the United States in their present war with Great Britain, and hence send you into an American port as a prize."

"This is a remarkable proceeding, sir."

"It may seem to you such, sir; but now, I would ask, are you willing to go aboard your vessel, and in company with this ship, sail for Boston, there to surrender yourself, your vessel and crew to the United States?"

"No, Sir Pirate, I am not," haughtily responded the Englishman.

"Are you aware, Sir Englishman, that I made you my prisoner, after a well-thought engagement, and that it is a well-known fact that buccaneers are not merciful to prisoners?" and Royal spoke with an almost threatening air.

"I am aware that superior marksmanship, on the part of your accursed gunners, disabled my vessel, and enabled you to board me with your cut throat crew; while to save life, I—"

"Surrendered a brig-of-war, carrying sixteen guns and a crew of one hundred and fifty men, to a schooner of six guns and one hundred men. But that has nothing to do with the subject in hand. I well know an Englishman's love of honor, so I again ask, will you run your own vessel into Boston as a United States prize, giving me your parole so to do?"

All were surprised at the offer, and breathlessly awaited the reply of the Englishman, who, after a moment of painful thought, said, sternly:

"And suppose I refuse?"

"I will hang you and your officers at the yard-arm of your own vessel, put your crew in double irons, throw half of my own men aboard and run your vessel into the nearest American port and give her over to the authorities."

As he spoke Royal wheeled with flashing eyes and determined mien upon the British officer, who felt that he would do what he said, and replied impatiently:

"To save my own life, Sir Pirate, I would not yield an inch; but for the sake of my officers, and my crew, I accede to your wishes."

"It is right that you should. I ask your parole, as a man of honor, for yourself, your officers and crew, and demand that no signal shall be made to any British vessel you may meet to inform them of your condition. If you meet an American man-of-war, you are at liberty to surrender to her, if you desire, and should any vessel of your own flag attempt to overhaul this merchant craft we are now on, you are to claim her as your prize. Do you understand my terms, captain?"

"I do, Sir Pirate, and such a remarkable proceeding was never heard of before."

"Things still more remarkable will transpire before this war ends."

"And we are to rot in an American prison, I suppose, until—"

"No, I pledge myself, through this gentleman here, the captain of this vessel, that you shall go free as soon as you have surrendered your vessel to the proper authorities."

"And my officers and crew?"

"Shall be released with you. I know the United States will grant this in return for the present I make them of a fine cruiser."

"You are generous, buccaneer; what strange freak of virtue has come over you?" and the Englishman spoke sneeringly.

Royal seemed as though about to reply, but checked himself, and turning to Captain Pinkney, said quietly:

"Captain, you are at liberty to go on your voyage unmolested, and I look to you, sir, to see that the English crew are released as soon as my terms of release are complied with."

"I will do it, sir; but I can find no words to thank you, sir, for all—"

"Thanks to me are needless—this maiden has been the victor. Sir Englishman, if you will return to my boat, I will take you aboard your vessel."

The Englishman bowed haughtily, and without a word went over the side into the waiting boat, accompanied by the midshipman.

Then the chief turned to Pearl, who stood quietly by, a look of glad joy on her beautiful face.

"Lady, you have won a conquest—you have won me from a life of crime, and I bless you for it."

"If you only knew the anguish ever hovering about my heart, you would not wonder that I drown my life in piracy—nay, you would pity me, lady. But of my imbibed life I will not speak; yet I would say, that in the future, when you hear Royal, the Buccaneer, condemned as an inhuman wretch, that you will tell them that he is not wholly bad—that he has a heart, deep though it may lie in his breast."

"I will, I will—no one shall slander you in my hearing."

"Thank you, lady—from my heart I thank you—one day, I hope we may meet again, for the Witch of the Wave is a wild wanderer about the waters, and some time again you may venture upon the seas—now farewell," and Royal bent low before the maiden, who stepped forward and held forth her hand, her heart too full to speak.

"No, lady, I would pollute your tiny hand with my touch."

Pearl hesitated an instant, and then took from her finger a ring containing but one stone—a ruby of great value and beauty.

"Here, will you wear this, from me, and when tempted to sin, let it remind you of me—and God grant, guard you from crime—here, your hand, please."

Royal held forth his hand in a half-timid manner, and Pearl slipped upon the left little finger, the ring.

"Lady, against the United States you will never hear that my guns are turned; but against America's foe they shall blaze forth until peace again settles upon land and sea. Having no country, I, therefore, have no country's flag, and my own sable banner shall continue to fly above my decks; but beneath its black folds I will never again combat for gold—farewell."

Stooping quickly over and kissing the little hand he still held in his own, Royal turned quickly, sprung over the side into his boat, and was rowed rapidly away.

With eager eyes, and happy hearts at their escape, all on board the Queen watched the boat until it touched the side of the cruiser.

A few moments it remained alongside, and then headed for the Witch of the Wave, and ten minutes after Royal, the Buccaneer Chief, was upon his own deck.

A short while after the cruiser, having repaired damages, signaled for the Queen to follow in her wake, and squared away on a northerly course, while the schooner came swiftly down toward the American under a cloud of canvas.

Passing within easy hail, her men at her guns, the Witch of the Wave looked grandly beautiful.

Upon the quarter-deck stood Royal, his arms folded across his broad breast.

Then, at a signal of the chief, there boomed forth from the schooner gun after gun, until thirteen had been counted.

With the first gun the Stars and Stripes went up to the fore, with the last gun, the American flag descended again to the deck.

Then away swept the vessel upon a southerly course, and from the inmost depths of Pearl's heart came a sigh, when she could no longer see the handsome form and sad face of Royal, the young buccaneer chief.

CHAPTER XV.

CHASING A PIRATE.

NEARLY a year has passed away since the strange meeting and parting of the English, American and pirate vessels upon the waters, and in that time Royal, the Buccaneer, has won a name known upon every sea, and especially

feared by Great Britain, against whom he has proven himself an untiring and deadly enemy.

Standing upon the deck of a vessel, which the reader once before saw, coming into the harbor of Vera Cruz, were a group of officers, gazing earnestly ahead upon the waters, where was visible a sail, perhaps two leagues distant.

Under chasing canvas, the American brig-of-war was rushing down toward the stranger and making eight knots an hour.

One of the group of officers, upon the quarter-deck, and he who seemed to be the commander, was gazing through a glass at the strange sail, and after a while remarked:

"Yonder craft is the Witch of the Wave, Rossmore."

"I hope you are assured of it, Captain Maurice," replied Marsden Rossmore, the officer next in rank.

"I am certain. You know my father, the colonel, built the schooner for the Mexicans, and I was put on board of her, with a crew from this brig. It was before you were ordered aboard, and prior to the death of Captain Scott, whose place I took, you know."

"Well, I run her out to Vera Cruz, and we were chased by Royal, the Buccaneer, in a schooner he then sailed, and which an English brig-of-war afterward sunk, it is said."

"But I ran away from him and reached Vera Cruz in safety, and the very night this very brig sailed into the harbor, Royal and his crew cut the schooner out, and escaped to sea in her."

"I heard of the affair. It was a most gallant act, even if a pirate did do it."

"Indeed it was. I shall never forget the way the Mexicans raved and swore when they found out how they had been outwitted—why Royal and his crew enlisted in their service, and not to be mean he left them a small *carera* in which he had come into the harbor."

"Did you see Royal himself, Captain Maurice?"

"Yes, Rossmore, though I did not know until long afterward that the handsome young fellow whom I talked with was the famous pirate. You see, though my father built the schooner, he had never seen it, his ill health causing him to travel; with my sister he visited Vera Cruz in one of his merchant ships, hoping to find me there; but we had sailed before their arrival and I missed them. On the way to Boston the Queen, my father's vessel, was chased and overhauled by an English cruiser of sixteen guns, but ere they could board her, an armed schooner that had been following in the Englishman's wake attacked him, and by Jove, whipped him, thus winning two prizes."

"But now comes the gallant part, for, struck with my sister Pearl's face, and touched by something she said to him, Royal released the Queen, and sent the English cruiser under parole to Boston, where they both arrived in safety. But Pearl described to me in her letter, Royal, the Buccaneer, and it is the same handsome young fellow I saw at Vera Cruz—and, by the way, I think Pearl is half in love with him; but who can blame her?"

Marsden Rossmore looked as though, under the circumstances, he blamed her; but thought if he were Royal, he would not.

"And your father did not recognize the schooner?"

"Oh, yes, he knew that Royal had cut out his vessel, for he had just heard all in Vera Cruz; but then, he had nothing to say to the buccaneer, and perhaps thought it best not to make his knowledge known."

"He was doubtless right—it would do no good; and you are certain yonder vessel is Royal's schooner?"

"Yes, Rossmore; I know her well, and would under most any circumstances, for I drew the model which my father adopted in building her; but they say Royal changes her into a brig, and alters her so that she is indeed what they call her, a witch of the wave."

"You will run her down, then?"

"By all means, if I can; but she is a swift sailer, and unless Long Tom can cripple her, we can have little hope of catching her, swift as is the Dreadnaught."

"How about his splendid service in behalf of the United States, captain?"

"That must gain him clemency from Government; it is my duty to overhaul him if I can, for pirates are making these waters too hot for honest craft of late. Give the brig more clothing, Rossmore, for we are creeping up to the schooner."

The additional canvas was soon spread, and the Dreadnaught went tearing through the water at a rapid rate, and momentarily gained upon the schooner, which seemed to be using

every effort to escape, for she had all the sail set that would draw.

"That is the schooner; but I cannot see how it is that we are creeping on her—she must be crippled some way—beat to quarters, Mr. Rossmore, for we are about in range of Long Tom."

The roll of the drum resounded through the ship, and the obedient seamen went quickly to quarters.

"Gunner, clear old Long Tom, and send yonder schooner our card," called out Captain Rupert Maurice, delighted at the prospect of overhauling the famous rover.

A few moments after the deep boom of the gun broke over the waters: the whirl of the shot followed, and the iron messenger buried itself very near the stern of the schooner.

"Run up the Stars and Stripes," was the next order, and instantly the American flag fluttered to the peak.

Instantly there was a change visible on board the schooner, for the black flag, with its white skull and cross-bones, and red crossed swords, was run up—the flag of Royal the Buccaneer.

At the same time the beautiful vessel seemed to fly ahead, and every instant gained rapidly upon the brig.

"By Jupiter! the fellow was towing cables astern, to retard his progress, so as to have a better look at us. Give him another shot, gunner."

The order was obeyed; but the shot fell short, and, although crowded with canvas the brig could not hold her own with the fleet schooner, which was soon out of range, and bowling along quietly, as though no deadly enemy hovered in her wake.

CHAPTER XVI.

RUN INTO A TRAP.

"ROSSMORE, I fear I was foolhardy in running in here—had the wind held out it would have been all right—as it is, I fear for the safety of the brig," and Captain Maurice glanced around him with an anxious expression upon his handsome face—an expression that was reflected upon the face of his lieutenant, Marsden Rossmore.

And indeed there was cause for anxiety, for in his eager pursuit of the schooner Captain Maurice had steered boldly into a self-locked harbor, risking the safety of his vessel to run the buccaneer to his lair.

The last seen of the schooner was when she glided into some inlet, or basin, in the high hills that broke off precipitately at the sea.

Where she had gone none with certainty knew; but they felt convinced that she was quietly anchored in some secure haven not far from them.

Guarding the outlet to the sea as the brig was it would be impossible for the Witch of the Wave to escape to open water again, and Captain Maurice felt confident that he could capture the buccaneer craft by boarding with his boats.

But an unlooked-for evil presented itself, just as the brig gained the inner waters, and was slowly moving along under an overhanging cliff—a dead calm fell upon the sea, and the vessel-of-war was forced to quickly drop anchor.

Taking advantage of the calm, Rupert determined to at once move off in the boats to the attack, feeling confident that he could easily find the retreat of the schooner.

But while the men were preparing for the expedition, there came to every ear a low, rumbling sound—ominous of coming danger.

Every ear heard it, and every eye glanced quickly seaward.

The look brought pallor to every face, for sweeping down from the sea, though yet miles away, came a storm, the angry mutterings of which grew momentarily louder and louder.

Upon a lee shore, a storm rushing upon them, and not a breath of air to fill the sails, while upon every side were rocky dangers, was certainly an appalling evil.

Instantly the order to call away the boats was countermanded, and the young commander bent every energy to the safety of his own vessel.

"That storm rushes on like a mill-race, Rossmore, and darkness and the gale will reach us together."

"If I only had a breath of air, I could work out of this—by Jove! I will try the boats—call them away and fill them with full crews—we will tow out!"

The boats were at once ordered out ahead, filled with sturdy oarsmen, and with tow-lines attached to the brig's bows.

Then the anchor was hauled from the bottom, and with a strong will the iron muscles of the seamen bent to their work.

For some time they pulled away with tremendous strokes, and then a look of disappointment crossed the young captain's face.

"The tide is running in, and the pressure of the hurricane drives the sea before it too hard for the boats to be of service. It is too bad—too bad!"

"Call in the boats, Mr. Rossmore, and then let go both anchors. I will then strip the brig of everything that will give the wind a hold, for our only chance is to ride it out—if we fail in that we are doomed."

Every man aboard ship felt the desperate danger as thoroughly as did the captain, and they worked with a will, for their lives hung by a thread.

"How would it do to signal for a pilot, captain? There are certainly settlers along this shore, for as we ran in, you know, we saw several cabins on the hillsides?"

"A good thought, Rossmore. If we can get a pilot we can either run in to some secure haven or work out when the blow strikes us. Clear away Long Tom, Mr. Rossmore, and fire signal guns."

A few moments more and the deep roar of the gun awakened a thousand echoes along the rocky shore, and startled from their nests and retreats hundreds of screaming sea-birds.

Again and again the deep, piteous appeal for aid went forth, the hoarse voice of the cannon seeming hoarse from the energy of its cry.

Toward the shore, after each brazen call for help, the eye of every officer and man was turned, searchingly watching for some sign of coming aid.

But gun after gun pealed forth, until its roar mingled with the thunder of the coming hurricane, the rumble of the wild waters—still rushing down upon the devoted vessel.

Until darkness began to creep over the waters the men eagerly looked and longed for help, while nearer and nearer came the storm.

Then from the inky storm-clouds would break a vivid flash of silvery lightning, and the crash of thunder would follow—the next moment the scene would be ablaze with the red flash of the cannon, and its roar would die away as had the thunder of the clouds.

Still upon the sea around the brig rested the awful calm, and darkness settled gloomily down upon the face of the waters, as though to cover with a pall the scene of revel that death must soon hold upon that rocky coast, unless aid came from some quarter.

"A boat! a boat!"

The words were almost shrieked from the lips of the lookout, and every eye turned eagerly shoreward, every heart bounded with a throb of hope.

"Whereaway?"

"Just under the shadow of the cliff, sir."

"Throw over a blue light, Mr. Rossmore."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the lieutenant sprang nimbly to obey the order.

A moment after and a weird light lit up the scene, making the brig look like a spectral barque upon a phantom sea.

"Secure that gun, forward—ha! I see the boat now; it is a pilot."

"Ahoy! ahoy! row with a will, lads, or all is lost," and Rupert Maurice sent his voice in ringing tones across the waters.

In the boat were two persons, both pulling with a determined energy that sent the frail craft flying over the waters.

Upon the arms of those two men hung the lives of all in the brig—ay, their own lives, and all well knew it.

Then from a hundred throats burst a wild cry of encouragement.

"Pull, lads, pull! pull for your lives."

The chorus of voices arose above the roar of the coming storm, and floated across the water.

Then back came the answer—in deep, ringing tones—in a voice that had no atom of fear in it:

"Ay, ay: up with your anchors all—set storm-sail."

A wild cheer burst from the crew, and to a man they sprang to obey—he who spoke was their master—his hand must save them from death.

On, on, plunged the hurricane, and on, on, flew the boat; and then it became a race between life and death.

Death lay in the coming storm—life lay in the coming boat.

A few more tremendous strokes of the oars, and the boat shot alongside.

A wild burst of voices, a rushing of feet, a deafening roar of wind, wave, and thunder, a vivid blaze of lightning, and the storm had struck the devoted brig, with its legions of destroying powers.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PILOT.

As soon as the two men reached the brig's side, they sprung on deck, casting adrift their little boat—it was no time then to think of saving it.

Rupert Maurice, trumpet in hand, was about to address him whom he believed the pilot; but two dark forms bounded by him and the next moment stood at the wheel.

"Are those anchors aboard?" sang out the clear voice of the pilot, who stood upon the right of the wheel, while his companion held the left.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Good! down all! the shock is coming!"

As the last words left the pilot's lips the hurricane was upon them, the brig was raised bodily in the air, and hurled forward with terrific force into the seething waters, while she bent far over as though she would never right again.

On board all seemed a chaos of death and the wildest confusion, for a dozen men were torn from their desperate clinging to bulwarks and rigging, and whisked away like mere straws, their despairing cries smothered by the merciless waters.

A moment of terrible doubt to all, and then the good brig righted, crouched down, like a panther preparing for a spring, and then, as her storm-sails still held firm, in spite of the terrific strain upon them, bounded away into the inky darkness—illuminated ever and anon with arrowy streaks of lightning, which only served to make the gloom more dense.

But at the helm stood the pilot and his companion, and clinging near them were Rupert Maurice and Marsden Rossmore.

Taking advantage of a vivid sheet of fire that burst from the trailing storm-clouds, all in the brig turned their gaze upon the faces of those two men.

The one upon the right of the wheel was a man of splendid proportions, and dressed in a close-fitting oil suit, while a cap of the same material sheltered his head.

His face was youthful, stern, decided and fearless—his hand clutched the wheel with a determined, confident grasp.

His companion possessed a slender, wiry form, also protected by a storm-suit, and his face was pale, calm, and yet fearless, while his eyes were constantly upon his comrade, as though upon him hung all.

Those who thus beheld the two men at the wheel gave a sigh of relief—there was something in their manner that bade them hope that all would be well.

Whenever a vivid flash of lightning would come—bright enough to blind every eye, the eagle gaze of the pilot would glance landward, and then quickly ahead.

To all on the brig it seemed as though they were rushing at mad speed directly to destruction.

Upon one side of them was a wild seabreaking to atoms upon rugged reefs—upon the other side was a rocky coast, against which the waves hurled themselves with relentless fury.

But, on, still on sped the brig, the helmsman making no direct change in her course and keeping her headed, seemingly, between a line of reefs and the shore, with which he was running parallel.

A half-league was thus passed over, when suddenly a flash of lightning showed, almost above them, a dark, overhanging cliff rising far above the masts.

Every heart ceased to beat with dread among officers and crew, and then all eyes were turned upon the pilot.

He was calm, unmoved, and the gaze of his companion still rested upon him in perfect confidence.

Again came a flash, and the threatening cliff was off their lee stern quarter, and a sigh of relief mingled with the mad winds.

Then, in his distinct, ringing tones, that pierced fore and aft the vessel, came the order:

"Stand ready all to wear ship—hard! hard! starboard! hard down!"

Plunging, diving, bounding, the sharp bows of the brig swept round, drenched by torrents of water, struck hard by surging waves, yet still sweeping up obedient to her helm until, for an instant, she hung in the very teeth of the gale, and then went about—cheered by a hundred throats that burst forth in wild hurrah.

"Haul in everything! strip her close!" came the next order.

And unhesitatingly the crew obeyed, while gradually the force of the wind was less felt, the waves grew less wild, until a friendly flash of lightning showed the tall cliff upon the other

quarter—they had rounded the point and were gliding into a haven of safety.

Slowly the brig glided ahead, until presently her momentum was checked—around her all was calm—outside, beyond the rocky wall, the sea and wind still raged in fury.

"You can let fall your anchor here, captain—unless the wind sweeps around to the northeast, you will be perfectly safe in this basin."

And the pilot spoke with perfect calmness. Ere Captain Maurice could reply, Marsden Rossmore cried:

"Three cheers for the pilot!"

With a will they were given with a three times three, and, the battle-lanterns being brought aft, their light was turned full upon the man who had saved them.

In response to the cheers he bowed low and said, quietly:

"Thank you, lads; captain, will you now permit me to trouble you to set my comrade and myself ashore—you know we lost our boat."

"And you shall have one of the brig's to replace it; but, come into the cabin with me and partake of a glass of wine and some refreshments; besides, I owe you far more than thanks for your noble work, for you saved our lives, sir."

"You owe me nothing, captain; gold I do not need, sir, and in saving you I have but done as my heart dictated."

"Surely you will not refuse some reward for your services, sir?" said Rupert, with surprise.

"Assuredly I will, Captain Maurice."

"What! you know me, then?" exclaimed the American, with increased surprise.

"We have met before, captain; but it matters not when or where. Will you allow your boat to set me ashore?"

"Certainly—call away the gig, Mr. Rossmore; but tell me, sir, who are you?"

"A seaman, captain—one whom you may some day meet upon the high seas. If this storm sweeps around, sir, as it may do, I will see that you are piloted out. Farewell, Captain Maurice."

Rupert held forth his hand in rather a hurt manner; he felt sorrow that he could in no way serve one who had risked his life to save him.

The pilot grasped his hand warmly, saluted the officers and men grouped around, and, followed by his companion, went over the side into the waiting boat.

For a few moments the young commander walked moodily to and fro, and then said quickly:

"By Heaven! I forgot all about asking him regarding the pirate schooner—recall that boat, Mr. Rossmore."

"Ho! the boat ahoy!" rung out over the waters; but no answer came, and again the hail was repeated, but with like success.

"There is a mystery about this I cannot fathom. Ha! there comes the boat, Rossmore."

A few moments more, and the coxswain of the gig came aft.

"Where is the pilot, sir?"

"Ashore, captain."

"Did you not hear my hail, sir?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"But what? Why did you not return?"

"Because the pilot told us to go on, sir."

"And who should you obey, sir—your commander or the pilot?"

"You, captain; but it was out of my power, sir, for the pilot and his messmate covered us with their pistols, and it was death to resist."

"In Satan's name, who is that fellow?" angrily said Rupert Maurice.

"He sent you this, sir," and the coxswain held forth a small package.

Seizing it hastily, Captain Maurice beheld the light of the battle-lantern a tiny flag. It was black, had a white skull and crossbones, and a pair of red crossed swords in the center. It told the whole story, and in a hoarse voice Rupert Maurice said:

"Yes, I remember him now—we met at Vera Cruz."

"Rossmore, the daring pilot who has just saved us was *Royal, the Buccaneer!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WITCH OF THE WAVE.

WHEN it was known who had been the strange pilot that had guided the brig from shipwreck to safety, a silence fell upon all for some moments, while a superstitious terror pervaded the crew.

Many an old seaman shook his head in ominous silence, while others were heard muttering that *Royal, the Buccaneer*, was none other than the devil himself.

As for Rupert Maurice, he knew not what to think—once he had saved his father's life, his sister's honor; now he saved the life of himself and crew.

Though not partaking of the crew's superstition, he yet knew not how to solve the mystery of the strange affair.

His well-known friendliness to the United States had been proven in many ways; still, he was Royal, the Buccaneer, and his orders were to hunt down all pirates.

"Well, Rossmore, here is food for thought," said the young captain as he and his lieutenant sat together in the brig's cabin, indulging in a light supper, washed down by delicious wine.

"Indeed, it is a nut to crack; but what is to be done, Rupert?" answered Marsden Rossmore, who always called his commander by his Christian name when not on duty, for the two had been middies together.

"Wait until day breaks and then point out the schooner; I will endeavor to make him surrender without a fight—if not, we must take him, sadly as I dislike raising my arm against one who has so nobly served us, ay, and mine before me."

"It seems hard, but must be done; the buccaneer will not submit tamely, I am assured."

"No, Marsden; but I think I can safely promise him pardon for himself and crew if he does—he deserves it; then I will show him that I have three guns to his one, and two men to his one."

"He cares little for odds against him—I have heard that he was bold enough to attack a frigate."

"Yes, Royal, the Buccaneer, would do any desperate act of courage—What is that you say, quartermaster?" and Rupert turned toward a seaman who just then entered the cabin.

"The officer of the deck would see you, sir."

"I will come up immediately. What new scene is to transpire, I wonder? Come, Marsden."

So saying, Captain Maurice went on deck, accompanied by his lieutenant.

"Well, Sydney, what is it?" he asked of an elderly officer, who was gazing somewhat anxiously around him.

"I do not like the looks of the sky, sir—the wind veering, as you may feel, for the waves are being driven even in this secure haven."

"You are right, Mr. Sydney—I notice that the brig is beginning to seem uneasy at her anchors."

"We will hold on here for a while, and if the wind chops further round to the northeast, we will signal again for the—the—"

"Do you think he would come aboard, after having made known to you who he was, sir?"

"Yes, that man would do anything; he saved the brig once, and he would do it again, though doubtless he would do so only upon my pledged word not to take him—and I would give it," added the young officer, thoughtfully.

Each moment the waters of the basin grew more and more violent, and the cliff no longer sheltered the brig from the wind, which began to whistle mournfully through the rigging.

"The wind veers rapidly, and this is a nasty place in a blow—see! the lightning then gave us a view of a fearful prospect—a rocky coast upon three sides of us."

"Yes, captain; but it seems to open seaward," said Lieutenant Sydney.

"No; you have forgotten the reef—we are in a tight place—how swiftly the gale is sweeping around—fire the signal-gun, Mr. Sydney."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And the officer walked forward, and five minutes after the pleading notes of the gun were again heard.

"Cease firing! in God's name, what was that?" cried Rupert Maurice, as the red flash of the gun had given him a glance of some object inshore.

All eyes turned landward and endeavored to pierce the gloom.

Then, as their gaze became accustomed to the darkness after the blinding flash of the gun, they beheld what appeared to be the misty form of a woman floating upon the waters.

Nearer and nearer it came, a greenish light pervading it and a mantle of snowy white seeming to encompass the form, which looked as though floating in air a few feet above the dark waters.

All gazed upon the strange sight, some in superstitious terror, some in amazement, until it was plainly visible—a woman's form clad in white, and over which hovered a weird light of greenish hue.

The hair hung in masses upon the bare shoulders, and the eyes stared glitteringly ahead.

One arm was outstretched, white and bare, and the forefinger of the hand pointed ahead, as though marking her course; the other hand clasped the hilt of a dagger in her girdle.

Not a word was heard upon the brig—not an officer or seaman moved—they all seemed spell-bound while the weird figure drew nearer and nearer.

"Ahoy, the brig!"

Every heart on the brig gave a quick throb—the challenge rung out in such sharp, stern tones, and so unexpectedly.

Then, their eyes momentarily turning from the mysterious form, they caught sight of the shadowy outline of a vessel hovering above.

"Ahoy, the brig!"

Again came the hail, and Rupert Maurice, throwing off the spell that had held him enthralled, answered:

"Ahoy!"

"You signaled for a pilot?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"You need one, for this is no longer a safe anchorage with the gale sweeping round. Up anchor, lively, and follow me out—it is your only chance."

It was the voice of the strange pilot—all recognized it.

Instantly the orders of Captain Maurice and his officers rung out, and in the shortest time the anchor was up and the brig under just canvas enough to work her easily.

In the mean time the strange vessel glided by slowly, and Rupert Maurice gave a sigh of relief as he beheld that the weird-looking specter was the figure-head of the buccaneer schooner, the Witch of the Wave, lighted up by some contrivance within—yet strangely spectral and unearthly did it look floating along as it did in the gloom and above the dark waters.

At the wheel of the schooner stood the tall form of Royal the Buccaneer, as calm and unmoved as he had been at the helm of the brig.

Slowly the schooner glided ahead on the starboard tack, passing within half a length of the brig's stern; then, as she came back upon the other tack, the brig began to move through the waters, and followed slowly in her wake.

A few moments more and the force of the gale struck them, and they forged ahead at a lively pace, the schooner bounding from wave to wave, the brig plowing through them.

Around them all was darkness, astern the land could no longer be seen, ahead all was blackness tangible.

Yet still the schooner held her course, guided by a master hand, and closely in her wake followed the brig, with Rupert Maurice and Marsden Rossmore at the wheel—they would trust no other hand at such a time.

"Starboard! hard-a-starboard your helm!"

It was the metallic voice of Royal, hurled back over the waters, and as he spoke the schooner swung gracefully around and darted off on another course.

"Starboard! hard-a-starboard it is!" sung out Rupert Maurice, and the brig executed the maneuver on the very spot where, a moment before, the schooner had set her the example.

Then followed a series of short tacks for a few minutes, and a run with a free sheet, after which a few long stretches carried the two vessels into the open sea.

The roar of the breakers, the white walls of foam, the rocky shore, was a league astern of them.

As they approached open water, the schooner gradually began to draw away from the brig, and Captain Maurice at once ordered more canvas spread, though the wind still blew a gale; but he was anxious to keep in sight of the buccaneer—had he been twice the crime-stained man he was, he would not now hunt him down; he wished to thank him for all he had done for himself and crew.

But when the extra canvas had been set, and the brig was plunging savagely ahead, all eyes again turned to look for the schooner.

But only a storm-swept ocean met their gaze; far or near, the schooner was nowhere visible, and Rupert Maurice said in a hushed voice:

"That craft is rightly named—she is indeed a Witch of the Wave."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PURSUER AND PURSUED.

TOWARD the close of a beautiful day, and at a time just prior to the ending of the last war between the United States and Great Britain, a large sloop-of-war was cruising slowly along in southern latitudes, her lookouts carefully searching the waters for sight of a strange sail.

At a glance a seaman would have said she was not American, for her yards were too square, and were painted black, a peculiarity of British vessels-of-war.

Certainly she was a finished model, with just proportion between spars and hull, while a heavy battery frowned upon her deck.

Standing aft, and gazing idly over the waters were two officers whose faces and forms are familiar to the reader.

They are Captain Delorme, Earl of Chadwick and Orlando Ellis, his first officer, who, three years before had poured such a ruthless fire from the brigantine Enchantress upon the wrecked Bride of the Sea.

"Then you think, my lord, that the war cannot last much longer?" said Orlando Ellis, as if carrying out a train of thought.

"No; we were wrong, to begin with, as you know, and the Americans have shown themselves too brave a people, both on sea and land, for us to attempt longer to subdue them. The war will end soon—nay, even now peace may be declared," replied Captain Delorme, who, by the death of his father a year before, had become the Earl of Chadwick.

"But you will not give up the sea, my lord?"

"No, Ellis—I will return to England and again take command of my brigantine, which I really disliked to give up, even for a sloop-of-war."

"With her I will continue my hunt after Royal, the Buccaneer—he whom we believed we had ended three years ago; but the devil has given him as many lives as a cat."

"He certainly seems infallible; you have a deadly hatred for him, my lord?"

"Ay, curse him! I have."

"Ellis, why I hate him as I do, I have never told you—one day, perhaps, I will—"

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway, maintop?"

"Dead ahead, sir."

"Keep your eye on her, and report as soon as you make out her rig and the course she steers."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

A short while more and the lookout again hailed the deck:

"A large brig, sir—heading toward us now, for she has changed her course."

"Ay, ay—helmsman, keep her steady as you are," and Captain Delorme paced slowly to and fro, his eyes bent down, his lips compressed, as though in deep and painful thought.

Nearer and nearer the vessels drew to each other, until it was evident to all that the stranger was a brig-of-war and an American.

"The fellow is bold. Does he intend to measure broadsides with me?" said the earl, as the brig still came on.

"No, sir, he is putting about now—there, he is setting more sail!"

"He has had a close look at us and means to run for it."

"Yes, Ellis, and there flies his flag—run up the colors of old England, and crowd on sail—we will give chase to the daring American."

A few moments more and the English vessel was plowing along, crowded from deck to truck with snowy canvas.

Ahead, a long league away, the American brig was flying under a full pressure of canvas—as if fully conscious that she was unable to cope with her more powerful adversary.

"Land ho!" sung out the man in the foretop.

"Whereaway, my man?"

"Just forward of the brig's bow, sir."

"It is the island of the buccaneers. Ellis, if we can corner the brig, between us and the land, we may yet take her—as it is, I think we are gaining upon her."

"We are decidedly, my lord—see for yourself, how we are pushing her; but I fear darkness may aid her escape."

"I hope not—oh! my dear wife, you have come on deck to watch the chase," and the earl stepped forward and offered his arm to a lady of refined appearance, who had just come from the cabin.

"Yes, Delorme, Lizette told me you were in chase of an American vessel," and the lady turned her beautiful, sad eyes toward the brig.

"A plucky American craft that we sighted two hours ago—if we continue to overhaul her, my dear, there will be a combat, for the American will not submit tamely."

"I wish that I could have prevailed upon you to remain at home—for I like not your presence here in danger."

"You risk far more than I do, Delorme; no, I could not remain at home—I would have died of sorrow, and I wished to be near you when you took—took Royal, the Buccaneer, for well I know, disguise it from me as you may, that to

capture that man, or kill him, is your devoted aim in life."

"I admit it—and have I not cause to wish him dead? Has he not wrecked your happiness and mine?"

"What is it, Ellis?"

"We are in range, sir, with the bow-chaser, and night is coming on—had we not best try to cripple him?"

"By all means—clear the gun for action, and let him have it—fire for his rigging, not his hull."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the lieutenant went forward, and several minutes after the vessel shook under the recoil of the heavy gun.

Standing upon the quarter-deck of the flying brig, were Captain Rupert Maurice, his father and sister, the latter conversing with Marsden Rossmore, who seemed deeply interested in the maiden, who, in the three years that had passed since the reader last saw her, had matured into beautiful womanhood.

"Father, I wish you had accepted the admiral's invitation, and gone to Havana in his frigate," said Rupert, glancing somewhat anxiously at the pursuing sloop-of-war.

"No, my estates in Cuba demanded my instant care, and I could not await the sailing of the admiral."

"Besides, his frigate was just as likely to meet with an English ship-of-the-line, and—"

"But the frigate was superior to any vessel in these waters, while my little brig has to run from a larger foe—it is a pity that we mistook the Englishman for the American sloop-of-war Vixen, and thus allowed her to get so near us; but I certainly believed her to be the English craft that the commodore captured some months ago—they are very like in hull and rig."

"I fear the sloop outsails you, Rupert."

"She certainly does, and I am pressing the Dreadnaught hard—if it were not for Pearl, I would be half-tempted to fight the fellow."

"That you will have to do, or submit tamely—see, they are clearing the bow guns for action," and Colonel Maurice handed the glass to his son.

"They are indeed. Father, please take Pearl at once to the cabin—and as you are a non-combatant, will you kindly remain there yourself?"

"No—my place is on deck with you—the odds against you are terrible as it is; come, Pearl, you must at once go to a place of safety."

The maiden turned slightly pale, but said nothing, while she stepped forward and affectionately kissed her brother.

"Don't be rash, Ru; I will pray for victory for you, though I fear it cannot be."

A moment after she was gone, and then came rushing through the air the iron messenger from the English sloop-of-war.

"That was a close shot—he has a splendid gun; Mr. Ellis, beat to quarters, please, and have the brig put in her best fighting-trim."

And Rupert Maurice again turned his gaze upon his pursuer.

"Rupert, darkness is going to be our friend."

And Colonel Maurice again stood by the side of his son.

"Yes, sir; it is my intention to run as far inshore as possible, for there we can perhaps elude him with the land for a background."

"There comes another shot, and I have no gun that will yet reach him."

The firing of the bow-chaser on board the English vessel now became rapid and regular, and, improving with practice, the iron hail soon began to tell upon the rigging of the brig.

But darkness came to the aid of the American, and as soon as it became dense Captain Maurice changed his course, ran close inshore, and suddenly stripped his vessel of all canvas, leaving her floating upon the waters under bare poles.

"Now we will see how keen his eyes are; if we are discovered we will have one advantage, for we will be near his fire."

And in breathless silence the crew of the Dreadnaught stood at their quarters grimly awaiting the result of their captain's maneuver.

CHAPTER XX.

HO! PIRATES TO THE RESCUE.

FOR an hour or more the Dreadnaught lay upon the waters, the eyes of her crew eagerly watching for their large enemy, and hoping that they might escape in the darkness of the night.

But their hopes were doomed to disappointment, for suddenly through the darkness loomed up the shadowy outline of the sloop-of-war—heading directly for the brig.

"Starboard battery, ho! aim low and well—fire!"

The ringing order of Rupert was followed by a terrible discharge that shook the brig to her very center.

Away flew the hurricane of iron, raking the Englishman fore and aft, and with terrible effect, for the crashing of timbers, groans of the wounded, and stern cries of the officers were heard distinctly on the decks of the brig.

Again and again the American's guns flashed forth; but each gun was soon answered three to one, for, though sad havoc had reigned for a while upon her decks, the Englishman's well-trained crew soon stood undimly at their posts, and their fire began to tell upon the rigging of the Dreadnaught.

Finding that the guns of his enemy would wreck him if he continued to fight at long range, Rupert Maurice determined to attempt boarding, grimly remarking:

"If they conquer us, it will be upon their own deck!"

Nearer and nearer the two vessels ranged together, the combat momentarily growing fiercer and fiercer, and death holding high revel upon the decks of each craft.

"Boarders ahoy! now we have him—lay him alongside, helmsman!" cried the young American, who, with cutlass and pistol in hand, stood ready to lead his men on board the Englishman.

By his side stood his father and Marsden Rossmore, both thoroughly armed, and behind them were a hundred ready seamen.

A moment after the bows of the brig slid along the stern quarter of the sloop, the grappling-irons were hurled, and a hundred flying forms were in air in an instant.

With wild cheers they descended upon the decks of the Englishman, and a terrible hand-to-hand struggle began.

For some moments the fight raged fiercely, and neither side had given an inch of deck; but then the weight of overpowering numbers began to slowly force the Americans back, and in almost despair Rupert Maurice rallied his remaining men around him.

"Will you strike your flag? I dislike to cut down brave men!" and Captain Delorme sprang in front of the opposing lines.

"No!" came the answer, and again the combat began with fury; but steadily the Americans were driven back, and in a vain attempt to rally them Marsden Rossmore fell dead, run through the heart by a sword in the hands of Orlando Ellis, the English lieutenant.

With a cry of fury Rupert Maurice sprang forward, and his heavy cutlass fell upon the head of Orlando Ellis, who fell back into the arms of his seamen, a corpse.

But desperate valor would not stem the tide of battle—it was steadily setting against the Americans, and again the young officer glanced around upon his thinning ranks—before him was a larger number of stalwart sons of Old England than he had had in all his crew.

"Will you strike your colors now? it is madness to resist," cried the humane earl.

With anguish at his heart, Rupert glanced sadly around him in the pause that followed, and the words were hovering upon his lips:

"Yes, I strike my flag."

But suddenly a violent shock was felt by all, and over the bulwarks of the sloop-of-war came a flying mass of mad humanity, while from the midst came a trumpet voice:

"Ho! Pirates to the rescue!"

Then, amid the red glare of battle was seen the tall form of Royal, the Buccaneer, rushing to the fray, and behind him pressed four-score of desperate men, following their young chief to victory or death.

The rush of the buccaneers was irresistible, their mad charge drove the English before them, and Royal's arm struck down the brave Earl of Chadwick.

With yells, like fiends infernal, the buccaneers pressed forward, and closely supported by the Americans, they swept the decks.

"Down with your arms, and take quarter—we are not human wretches!"

Loud rung the words of Royal, and upon every side arose the cry of quarter, while a young officer hauled down the flag of Great Britain. The combat had ended, and the red deck was won.

"Captain Maurice, we meet again—I saw from my cliff lookout ashore that you were going to engage a powerful adversary, so I went aboard my schooner and sailed to your aid. Fortunately the darkness, and excitement of battle, allowed me to run you aboard unperceived."

It was Royal who spoke—his face calm, his manner unmoved.

By his side stood Rupert Maurice and his fa-

ther, both gazing in surprise and admiration upon the remarkable man before them.

At length Rupert said earnestly:

"Yes, again we meet, and again you have saved me and mine; from my heart I thank you, and from this night we can never more be enemies. Father, this is he whom men call Royal the Buccaneer, and who has proven our good friend."

Colonel Maurice stepped forward and warmly grasped the hand of the buccaneer, while he said, with deep feeling:

"Chief, three years ago you made my daughter a promise. I heard that promise, and I have watched your career anxiously. Thank God, you have held your word inviolate."

"I have kept my word, sir; but let us now look after the wounded."

"Captain Maurice, this vessel is your prize, sir; but I would advise that you would follow me into my retreat, for both the sloop and brig are crippled, and there you can repair at your leisure."

"I will send pilots aboard to run you in—the retreat is but two leagues distant."

An hour after, the Witch of the Wave was dashing shoreward over the dark waters, and in her wake followed the American brig and the English sloop-of-war, both under the charge of skilled buccaneer pilots.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EARL AVENGED.

WHEN the sun arose, the morning after the fierce combat, its rays fell upon the three vessels lying quietly at their anchors in the small harbor of the buccaneer island.

A busy scene was presented upon the decks of the American and English vessels, for the crews were removing the wounded to the cabins on shore, and burying the dead in a shaded spot beyond the hill.

Finding that the commander of the English sloop-of-war was not killed—in fact, not very seriously wounded, Royal had ordered him borne to his own quarters—the cabin on the hill—and there his loving wife had accompanied him.

As the Dreadnaught would have to be pretty generally overhauled, Royal requested that Colonel Maurice and Pearl should take their home ashore.

"It will be far more pleasant for you, as you can roam about the island at your will. My cabin is large, and you will have ample room," he said to Colonel Maurice.

"I thank you, chief, and Pearl and myself will accept your invitation. But come; you have not met my daughter, since you so nobly served her, years ago, and she would thank you for your gallant service last night."

Royal blushed like a boy; then his face turned very pale, as he bowed, and followed Colonel Maurice into the cabin of the brig.

At an open stern window sat Pearl, gazing out upon the scene ashore—the hamlet of the buccaneers, the crowded beach, the coming and going boats, containing the dead and wounded, and the hillside beyond.

It was a strange, stirring scene, and her thoughts were of him whose home it was.

"Pearl, the chief has come to see you."

The maiden started at the voice of her father, turned quickly, and stepped forward with extended hand.

Before her stood the man who had been daily and nightly in her thoughts since their meeting three years before! His form was just as elegant, even more so than then—his face just as handsome, yet it seemed much older, while a look of touching melancholy appeared to hover in his fine eyes.

From his face Pearl glanced quickly to his hand. Yes, he still wore the brilliant ruby she had given him!

The chief saw the look, and it gave him a subject for conversation, for, before, he hardly knew what to say—buccaneer chief though he was—he was yet embarrassed in the presence of the maiden.

"Lady, I have sought you to tell you that I have kept my promise. I have sought only the enemies of the United States upon the high seas, and turned my guns against other flags only in self-defense, when chased by cruisers—yet, not even to defend my ship, have I fired upon American vessels."

"So I have heard, sir. I felt that you would keep your word. But why did you still fly your hideous flag?"

"Lady, I inherited that flag from one whom I dearly loved; an outlaw, I had none other," and the chief spoke most sadly.

After a moment he resumed:

"But I have come to urge that you and your father take up your quarters ashore. My cabin is at your service. You will meet there Lady Chadwick, the wife of the earl who commanded the sloop."

"I will go, with pleasure."

Thus it was arranged, and an hour after the chief's cabin was full of guests.

Having attended to the duties devolving upon him, in the evening Royal walked leisurely up to the cabin, with the expressed purpose of seeing how the wounded earl was getting along.

But was that the reason? In his heart he knew that another motive moved his feet thither.

As he entered the cabin he was glad to see that the earl's injuries were less serious than he had supposed, for the Englishman was lying upon a lounge, with his wife seated by his side.

Near by were also seated Colonel Maurice, Rupert and Pearl.

Hesitating upon the threshold, Colonel Maurice caught sight of him, and springing up, cried:

"Come in, chief; come in. My lord, I would present to you Captain Royal, whom you have already long known by reputation."

The earl turned deadly pale, his lips set firmly as he turned his eyes upon the chief.

"You? You are not Royal, the Buccaneer!" he exclaimed, excitedly, half-arising from his couch.

"I am Royal, the Buccaneer, sir," haughtily responded the chief.

"You are scarcely more than a boy in years! It was nearly twenty years ago that—that—"

"Years ago Royal, the Buccaneer, first won fame as a pirate, sir;—three years since an English brigantine chased his schooner to this rendezvous, and, when dismasted in the gale, cruelly fired upon her. That fire killed him who first bore the name of Royal, the Buccaneer. In dying he left me the heir to his name, his flag, and his island retreat," and the young chief spoke with a distinctness that sent every word home to the ears of those who heard him.

"Thank God! I did slay him whom I sought for years, and years—him who wrecked the happiness of my poor wife and myself."

Chief, toward you I have no personal hatred, other than to any free-lance of the sea; but, he who left you his name and crime-stained flag, I hated as few men can hate," and, overpowered by his excitement, the earl sunk back upon the lounge.

A moment he lay quiet, his eyes riveted upon Royal, who leant against the doorway, his arms folded across his breast, a sad, dreamy light in his dark eyes.

Suddenly a strange light flashed across the face of the Englishman, and he said quickly:

"Chief, who are you? in God's name! who are you?"

A pallor spread over Royal's face; his lips quivered, and his eyes burned brightly as he replied, bitterly:

"I am one accursed of men—I am Royal the outcast, the Buccaneer!"

Turning quickly he would have left the room; but, barring his way, stood the woman Elsie—she who had called herself his mother.

CHAPTER XXII.

STARTLING DISCLOSURES.

"WOMAN, why come you here?" demanded Royal, severely, and he would have forced her away; but she said, firmly:

"I come to do you justice, boy! Hold! hear what I have to say."

Struck by her manner, Royal hesitated. Elsie entered the room and confronting the Englishman and his wife, said in her peremptory tones:

"My Lord Delorme, and you, my fair lady, I have a tale for your ears, which for long years have not drank in much of joy, I know. You asked who was this man? I answer: he is Royal, the Buccaneer!"

"The woman is mad. Will you have her removed, chief?" said the earl kindly.

"Mad? No, I am not mad, though why I am not brain-crazed God only knows. I say, there stands Royal, the Buccaneer; but, that is not all that he is, my lord!"

"In Heaven's name, speak. Tell what you have to say," cried the earl, now trembling in his intense excitement.

"I will; but it is in justice to him, not to you. Do you know me, Earl of Chadwick? Do you recognize in this white-haired old woman her whom you once said you loved—Elsie Cavanaugh?"

"Elsie Cavanaugh! Good God! can it be?" and the earl sprang to his feet, while his wife seemed almost overcome.

"Ay, it is true, my noble lord—true that you, the elder son of the great Delormes, won my love, ay, sent me a disgraced being into the world! But that was not all your crime, my lord, for when your brother was away at sea, serving his country, you won from him the woman that was to have been his bride; you made her your wife, though you knew that her heart was another's!"

"Ay, you did this wrong, and sent your only brother to wander broken-hearted through the world!"

"Elsie, hear me!"

And the Englishman spoke in tones that commanded respect.

"Hear me, Elsie! Far be it from me to speak unkindly of the dead—yes, of my father, who is gone; yet I must speak. True, Elsie, I loved you, and secretly you became my wife—"

"Ha! would you lie to me, Earl? I became your—"

"Wife, Elsie, for we were legally, though secretly married; but my father would not hear that I, heir to his proud name and vast wealth, should marry a poor curate's daughter. I confessed all to him, Elsie, and I was weak enough to yield to his demands that I should at once give you up, and that he would sever the marriage by law."

"Not until his death, when I overlooked his papers, did I know that you had been led by him to believe the marriage was a mock one, to be told that you were not my wife. When I returned from my cruise you were gone, none knew where, though it was said you had fled with another to Virginia."

"Then it was I fell into another plot laid for me by my father. I was married to my present wife here, she who was engaged to my brother. It was in vain she pleaded and I resisted—the names of the two families must be united, and our parents were inexorable. Thus we were married, and from that day to this I have done all in my power to make my wife happy, and a truly noble woman she has proven herself—an angel on earth."

"I was weak, Elsie, but not intentionally criminal; no, not that, not that, I swear before high Heaven!"

"Lord Delorme, my old withered heart bounds with joy to hear your words, and, as you have poured gladness into my bosom, told me truly that I was your wife, I will now tell you that which will thrill every nerve in your body. You had a son?"

"I did, Elsie. His loss nearly broke the hearts of both of us—"

"He was captured by Royal, the Buccaneer?"

"Yes; captured or slain. I have always believed the latter; but, curses on the lawless wretch! I run him to his death."

And the earl spoke fiercely, his eyes blazing with pent-up wrath.

"Did you know who it was you run to the death—who it was that was slain by your merciless guns?"

"A curse to the sea—one outlawed among men—"

"Delorme, hear me!" and, dashing the tears from her streaming eyes, Lady Delorme turned to her husband.

"You, Alma? What can you have to say, now?"

"Alas—alas, too much! I told you, Delorme, that the vessel in which I sailed from the States was overhauled by Royal the Buccaneer, and that he tore from me my child; but, my poor husband, I did not tell you that I recognized in the pirate chief one who—who— Oh God! how can I say it?"

"Speak, Alma; tell me the worst!"

"I will! Royal the Buccaneer was—was—your own brother, Rudolph Royal Delorme!"

"Oh God!" and the earl buried his face in his hands and shook like an aspen-leaf, while all present looked on in deepest pity.

As for the young sea-chief, he stood like a marble statue—his face as cold and stern as though carved in bronze.

"Lord Delorme, as you have deeply suffered, let me now pour into your ears words that will give joy to your heart."

"You asked who was this man, he whom men now call Royal the Buccaneer—"

"Speak, woman! for the love of God! speak!" and Lady Alma dropped on her knees before Elsie Cavanaugh, who slowly said:

"He is the Pirate's Protégé—he is your own son!"

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

WORD-PAINTING would never portray the scene that followed the disclosure made by Elsie—that Royal the Buccaneer was none other than the Pirate's Protégé, the little Octave, who, long years before, had been the only prize taken from the good ship Gull, by the famous rover, whose lost love had embittered his life and driven him to the lawless career of a sea-rover.

With gladness, though wearing as he did the brand of buccaneer, the earl and his wife welcomed back their long-lost son—he who had been as though dead to them—and warm were the congratulations of Colonel Maurice, Rupert and Pearl, for they felt that the force of circumstances, not inclination, had made Octave the Sea Rover's heir.

During the scene of joy that followed, Elsie glided unperceived from the room.

Finding that the earl was in no hurry to leave the island, and the excitement he had undergone having made his wound more serious, Colonel Maurice determined to at once sail for Havana, where his affairs imperatively demanded his attention.

As the brig was still in a crippled state, Royal urged that Maurice should take a crew from the Dreadnaught and sail in the Witch of the Wave, a proposition which the young officer gladly accepted.

The following evening, therefore, the fleet schooner, with Captain Maurice and seventy-five of the brig's crew on board, and his father as a passenger, set sail for Havana, leaving Royal to superintend the repairs on the two vessels, and Pearl under the care of the earl and his wife.

In the month that the schooner was gone, many were the walks enjoyed by Royal and Pearl over the island, and often were they accompanied by the earl and his wife, for the nobleman rapidly rallied again, and soon pronounced himself a better man than ever before.

In some of their strolls the young people would visit Elsie in her cabin in the hills, and be warmly welcomed by her; but she had become strangely sad, and would say:

"Soon you will go from here, out into the grand and happy world; but I will remain, for now that the war is ending, the people here can devote themselves to peaceful and honorable pursuits, and this will become an island settlement, with Elsie for its queen."

"But I will not last long—a few more years and I will lie in the valley yonder, yet I feel that I will be remembered."

At length the schooner returned to the island, and then was made known the joyful news: War had folded his bloody pennons, and Peace had cast its mantle over land and sea.

Shortly after the return of the schooner, the sloop-of-war, the brig and the Witch of the Wave set sail from the island on their voyage to Boston.

As they left the island harbor the buccaneer-settlement congregated upon the beach and waved them adieu, while upon the cliff stood the form of poor Elsie, gazing after the retreating vessels with a heart that was almost breaking.

Arriving at Boston, Earl Delorme, his wife and son became the guests of Colonel Maurice, who immediately posted off to Washington and made known to the President the eventful story of the life of Royal, the Buccaneer.

The result was a full pardon for the young chief and his crew, for their services were well known to the Government.

A week after the Witch of the Wave sailed for England, Captain Octave Delorme in command, and having as guests his parents, Colonel and Captain Maurice, and the lovely Pearl, between whom and himself existed a love that death alone could sever.

In due time the Witch of the Wave dropped anchor in the harbor of Liverpool, the American flag flying from her peak, and the party at once left for the grand old home of the Earl of Chadwick.

Through the influence of his father, a royal pardon was granted to Octave, who at once entered upon the rights of an honored citizen of Great Britain, and his most strange and romantic life becoming known, he was one of the most noted men in the realm.

A month after the return of the party, a grand wedding was celebrated in Chadwick Manor, for Pearl Maurice, the beautiful American belle, became the bride of Sir Octave Delorme, once known as Royal, the Buccaneer.

THE END.

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